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AUTHOR Streat, W. L.
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ABSTRACT

The Innovations Program, established by the Australian Schools Commission in 1974, was a small national program aimed at fostering local actions for change in Australian primary and secondary education. In this report, the author begins by examining different approaches to educational innovation and reviewing the literature on innovation. Part 2 analyzes the need for change in Australian education. It describes the historical and political contexts of the Innovations Program, noting long-term enrollment increases, educational uniformity, recent organizational changes, the national government's relationship to the states, and the emphasis on local initiatives for change. Implementation of the Innovations Program is covered in part 3, which recounts the program's development from 1974 to 1980 and discusses aims, values, priorities, the roles of "innovators" (teachers, students, and community members) and "counselors" (innovation stimulators and supporters), and the need to fit innovations to local contexts. For illustration, an Innovations Program project is traced in detail from conception to completion. Part 4 discusses issues and reflections arising from the Innovations Program, involving teacher and principal roles, national-local relations, product versus process emphases, and other issues. Conclusions about growth points for school-level innovation are presented, as is an assessment of the Innovations Program. (Author/RW)

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THE INNOVATIONS PROGRAM 1974-81: CONSTRUCTING AN APPROACH TO PLANNED CHANGE IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

W.L. STREAT

EA 014 909

Canberra, Australia
April 1982
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Whilst many have helped so generously, the work remains essentially my own perspective on the program and its role in Australian education.

INTRODUCTION

The Innovations Program was a small but unique national initiative to promote and foster educational change and innovation at the school and community levels in Australia.

Its implementation began in 1974 at a time of increased demand for improvements in formal education. In December, 1972 the newly elected national Labor Government established the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission to examine the needs of Australian primary and secondary education and to advise on how they might be met. Part of the ensuing Report(1) recommended that a program should be established for the purpose of fostering change. It asserted that change was required not only to improve upon past practices and forms of organisation but that change would be necessary if education was also to accommodate the future:

> "If the nation's schools are to bear the responsibilities which seem to the Committee to be inescapable in a society such as ours, then many innovations will have to be made in the organisation and conduct of learning."(2)

The Committee's belief was that newness - fresh approaches - developed by committed and capable people, particularly at the local, school level, would produce substantive, if sometimes small changes in the quality of schooling. The centre-piece of what became the Schools Commission Innovations

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1. Australia. Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission. Schools in Australia. AGPS, Canberra, 1973 (hereafter referred to as, 'Karmel Report').

2. Ibid., Para. 12.1.

Program was stated thus:

> "The effectiveness of innovation, no matter at what level it is initiated in a school organisation, is dependent on the extent to which the people concerned perceive a problem and hence realise the existence of a need, are knowledgeable about a range of alternative solutions, and feel themselves to be in a congenial organisational climate."(3)

The Committee concluded that to produce the improvements in schooling it envisaged the resources and initiative at the school level would have to be explicitly recognised and utilised more than ever before.

The principal aims of the Innovations Program have been stated(4) as:

- to improve the quality of school education by supporting grass-roots initiative;
- to improve the education of particular groups of students (those actually involved in projects funded under the program);
- to help people working in and for schools to develop their individual and collective capacities - their ability to devise and carry out improvements in their schools.

Through these objectives the Schools Commission hoped to foster not only practical proposals for the improvement of schooling, but also an increasingly favourable attitude to change

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3. Ibid., Para. 12.4.
4. D.M. Bennett. 'Educational Innovations: A Hundred Flowers', in Educational Innovations. Volume 7, No. 3, 1981, p. 3.

on the part of school people. In other words, to make school people and education systems as a whole more capable of self-improvement.

The essence of the program's strategy involved support for the generation and implementation of innovations and improvement oriented approaches to schooling based upon the perceptions and efforts of the people of school communities themselves. It was recognised that the people of school communities - parents, teachers, students - had a good deal of valuable personal knowledge as well as professional skills, considerable capacity for creativity and a diversity of personal and professional needs and values. Acting collectively or individually these people could play a significant role in educational improvement by implementing projects innovative in their particular contexts.

This approach explicitly rejected other widely adopted interventionist strategies for innovation and change, namely the 'top-down' or 'centre-periphery' model (involving direction from an external authority), the 'research, development and diffusion' model (involving external experts) and 'persuasive' models (involving, for example, in-service education). Apart from rejecting the interventionist approach to change the strategy of the program also rejected the notion that innovations, particularly those involving human interaction in learning situations, could be easily generalised and successfully adopted elsewhere. As a result the success of an innovation, or project, was to be judged not so much by the ease of its adoption, or its capacity for replication or routinisation, but by the benefits flowing to those immediately involved.

During the 1960's and 1970's substantial efforts were made in both Australia and the United States to stimulate change and improvement in schools. These efforts were born of perceived crises in the capacities of the respective education systems to deliver the quality of educational services demanded by public opinion. The assumptions underlying the American effort bear a close resemblance to those underpinning the work of the Schools Commission in Australia and its Innovations Program. They are(5):

. Schools will benefit from new methods because the schools are not serving everyone's educational needs well enough now. Schools can do better.

. Educational systems are either incapable of, and (or) hostile to, the generation of the amount and variety of reform believed to be necessary to adequately reform educational services.

. The impetus for, and substance of, reform can be helped along by temporary central government support of people(6) and projects at the school level. No major prior changes in education systems - management or organisation - are necessary in order for projects to be successful.

. The best (or most feasible) way to bring about change in education is by putting money into the hands of people directly associated with the schools.

. Changes sought by such funding programs will not come fast enough, or perhaps not at all, without central government seed money.

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5. P. Berman et.al., Federal Programs Supporting Educational Change. Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 1975-78. Volume V, pp 2-3 (hereafter referred to as 'Rand Studies').

6. In the United States, for 'people' read mainly district administrators; for Australia, in respect of the Innovations Program, read mainly teachers.

The further assumption is that the improvement of education is best achieved through reform of existing institutional and organisational arrangements and frameworks. It is a matter of the reform of what exists, not the replacement of schools with alternatives, for example of a non-formal kind like the family.

The reform effort sponsored through the Innovations Program was inexpensive. Of the Australian Government's considerable annual outlay for primary and secondary education, some 0.5 per cent was applied to the program - around $3 million per year between 1974 and 1981 or less than $1 per student per year. The funds were distributed in the form of grants to people and groups closely associated with schools: teachers, parents, students and community organisations who had developed proposals for educational improvement.

Anyone associated with primary and secondary education who had a worthwhile idea for the improvement of education could apply for assistance. Grants were not limited to the professionals working in schools - they could be awarded to parents, students and members of the community who could establish an interest in these levels of education. Education was seen as the province of all members of the community.

Between 1,000 and 2,000 applications for grants were received per year and over 5,000(7) projects were supported during the period of the program's existence. At any time some 1,000 projects were being implemented among the 10,000 schools across Australia. The limited funds available and the constantly high application rate meant that between 20 and 30 per cent of applications received support at any time and grants averaged around $5,000 per project.

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7. Includes small-scale projects with grants of $1,000 or less.

Recommendations on the development of the program and the allocation of its resources were made to the Schools Commission by a national Innovations Committee and state and territory Innovations committees. Supporting these committees and being central to the program's approach were groups of counsellors located in each state and territory. The program disbursed more than grants. Counsellors, people appointed by the Commission and committed to educational improvement, dispersed advice and help on request to people planning or implementing projects. Although counsellors could be appointed from any stratum or area of educational interest they were generally people drawn from school communities and hence the peers of those they assisted. This approach contrasted with the more conventional approaches to assistance in schools which tended to follow a hierarchical pattern of advice and support from the principal to the teacher. Under the program the peers of project directors were seen as helpful resource people.

Counsellors could be made available to help in the planning of a project, in providing assistance with its implementation or evaluation and in disseminating the experiences of its proponents and its outcomes. Counsellors were also required to make an initial on-site appraisal of proposals seeking Commission financial support. These appraisals were used by the various committees in preparing recommendations to the Commission on funding. In no case was a counsellor to impose his or her view on a proposal or a project - the counsellor's role was to provide assistance if requested, not to direct or control.

During the eight years of its existence the program underwent considerable development, partly as a result of new insights and partly as a result of the ideological tensions generated by the interaction of the many people involved in watching over the program's approach and development. A small grants scheme involving grants of up to $1,000 was introduced; directories of projects were compiled; an information retrieval service was established; a variety of publications and workshops were produced by the committees and counsellor groups; and experiments in the further decentralisation of program administration and devolution of power to counsellors in small regional settings were attempted.

Although consensus remained throughout the life of the program as to its basic approach, spirited debate was generated between the national committee and the Commission, between state committees and the national committee, within committees and counsellor groups and between the Commission and state education authorities about methods of program implementation and desired outcomes. Above all, concern was centred on program impact - how ephemeral or transient could a project be; how independent could it or should it be of the whole school or system context; how many projects should be funded in any school at a time consistent with the desirability of spreading the program's resources as widely as possible; where should resources be placed first - in a school context already progressive and innovative or in a school situation where tentative and perhaps less insightful but nevertheless critical steps are being taken to improve upon outdated methods? A further major debate centred on priorities - should program support be given to any project, providing it was of sufficient quality, or should the Commission from its national vantage point identify critical areas requiring innovation and improvement and respond in a preferential way to grass-roots responses in these areas? These issues are taken up in the body of the work.

This work describes and analyses the development and implementation of a national program to foster innovation and change in Australian primary and secondary schools. It is written from the particular perspective of the program's only director, the author of this study. The author was, as a result of his position, cast in the twin roles of participant and observer. This situation provided unique insights into program development although, of course, there were countervailing limitations on insights into program implementation in the field or at the local level. It also provided ready access to information and material although no sources have been resorted to that were not available to other people closely associated with the program and not employed full-time by the Schools Commission. The possible weaknesses of a work such as this relate especially to the participant-observer status of the author. Together with the advantages for analysis of close proximity to, and involvement in, program development there may also exist a tendency to be apologetic and defensive about certain motives, actions and program outcomes. Despite close attention to the requirements of academic rigour in investigation and analyses the author accepts that such a frailty may exist in this work.

The study examines approaches to educational innovation contrasting, in particular, interventionist strategies adopted in the United States with that of the Innovations Program (Part I). In Part II the historical background to government inspired efforts towards educational improvement in Australia in the 1970's is briefly outlined together with the political context giving rise to the Schools Commission and the Innovations Program and, finally, the genesis of the program. The development and implementation of the program is described in Part III. In Part IV a range of issues linked to strategies for educational change with particular relevance to school level action are examined. These include major issues and problem areas associated with the program, alternative approaches which might have been employed in the program, and an assessment of its major legacies.

This study, therefore, does not dwell upon particular projects, individual project directors or specific student populations which have received various forms of support from the program. Rather, the intention has been to provide, from a national perspective, a detailed overview of the program's rationale, the approach taken to its implementation and a range of issues involving school level change which have arisen as a result.

In its Report for the Triennium 1982-84 the Schools Commission recommended that the school-level Innovations element of the Special Projects Program (the Innovations Program) be replaced by a School Improvement Program which was regarded as the logical next step in a national school improvement strategy. This recommendation was not taken up by the Government apparently due to financial restraints it was imposing at the time along with a reduction in educational programs consistent with the Review of Commonwealth Functions (May, 1981). The operation of the Innovations Program ceased in December 1981.

Within the Schools Commission the Innovations Program was regarded as its 'flagship' in terms of promoting educational change. Most of the other Commission programs and initiatives had change and innovation as important ingredients but none encapsulated the thrust of educational innovation as completely as the Innovations Program and none appeared to capture the support and involvement of school communities as did the program. Moreover, no other Commission program related directly to the people of school communities without the intervention of the relevant education authority as did the Innovations Program.

A recent study(8) commissioned by the Schools

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8. Schools Commission/C.K. Malcolm and J.M. Owen. You are Special: An Investigation of the Professional Impact on Teachers of their Experiences in Developing and Implementing Innovations Projects Supported Financially by the Schools Commission. February, 1981. (Unpublished.)

Commission provides evidence to support the contention that the program was successful in achieving the objectives outlined in the earlier part of this Introduction. The study involved examination of the effects of projects on grantees in a stratified random sample of forty-five projects across three states. The study concluded that the effect of the projects on those involved was in every single case positive, and that in two-thirds of the cases the overall professional impact had been high.

PART I: INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

TWO APPROACHES

The intention here is to identify certain aspects of the literature on change and innovation and to comment upon them in relation to the Innovations Program. In particular, the main features of the program which were outlined in the Introduction will be set against the approach popular in the United States and among Australian Education Departments termed the Research, Development and Diffusion (RDD) model.

Both approaches deal with educational change leading to school improvement; changes which are expected to result directly or indirectly in benefits to students. In addition, the Innovations Program was also concerned to develop the individual and collective capacities of the people working in or for schools, e.g. teachers, parents and administrators. In other words, the process of innovation was perhaps as important as the project itself. As well as projects, therefore, the program was explicitly concerned with people - their development, growth, initiative, creativity and personal knowledge; it accepted their idiosyncratic responses to situations they perhaps knew better than anyone. The program, as a result, supported internally initiated (teacher, parent, student etc.) change processes. These emphases - concern for the development of people, and school-based changes - involved recognition of the likelihood of a slower pace of overall change and, in many cases, incremental achievements involving restricted expectations as to immediate, visible results. It followed that the program placed value upon the durability of the experiences of the participants in projects and their long-term application. The immediate success of a project and the resulting benefits to students were only part of the expected outcome.

In comparison, the approach summarised under the RDD heading tends to include a combination of the following features. There is a focus on educational products (kits, packaged school plans etc.) developed through the technology of foundations and research and development organisations and promoted and disseminated by business corporations or specially established educational enterprises. Schools and school people are seen as targets to be acted upon, change is introduced from outside through the agency of presumed rational and objective experts who intervene in school settings to identify problem areas, stimulate people to respond and plan the required changes. Even if the experts adopt a collaborative role only limited faith is placed in the school teacher or school administrator whose assumed helplessness is reinforced by the process itself. This approach has been directed towards major reorientations in schools or school systems involving large-scale and highly visible changes. It tends to involve the expectation of quick and dramatic results producing transformations in big educational units. It also tends to be impersonal.(1) The success of these projects is centred on the projects themselves and their continuation and routinisation in their settings.

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1. E.R. House, The Politics of Educational Change. McCutchan, Berkeley, 1974, p. 9 ff.

ASPECTS OF THE LITERATURE

The Problem of Failure

The literature on educational innovation is extensive. It has been swamped in recent decades by anecdotal, 'scientific' and hortative material, from the United States in particular, which has been accompanied by equally extensive attempts at practical reform in the school districts of that country. The results of all this knowledge and practice have been disappointing. It is almost as if the success rate for effective change varied in inverse proportion to the output of literature on the subject. Goodlad(2) writes of the continuing and frustrating failure of promising innovations to alter school practice. Sarason(3) comments that the more things appear to change the more they stay the same. Boyd(4) laments that after two decades of systematic efforts at reform research has revealed that little really has changed. Gross(5) asks the question: Why has there been so little pay-off from the large investment made in educational innovations in recent years? The answers to these questions and dilemmas are many and varied, as can be expected. The school is a complex organisation comprising a large number of people. The interaction of a school with its community is equally complicated especially as the social make-up of society becomes more diverse and the problems and possible solutions become harder to set out and agree upon. The problem must also be related to the strategies employed and is given expression in the terminology used.

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2. J.I. Goodlad. The Dynamics of Educational Change: Toward Responsive Schools. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1975, p.x.

3. S.B. Sarason. The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change. Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1971, p.2.

4. W.L. Boyd, 'Politics of Curriculum Change and Stability', in Educational Researcher. February, 1979, p. 12.

5. N. Gross, 'Critical Questions for Contemporary Education', in Intellect, October, 1973, pp. 24-26.

The Language of Innovation

Innovation in education can mean many things to many people. The dominance of American material in the literature on planned change has tended to give American strategies greater prominence and the language attached to those strategies a universality which may be inappropriate and confusing. In the 1970's the word 'innovation' would have meant something different to a person working in the Innovations Program, perhaps to a person working in the curriculum branch of a state Education Department, and certainly to a person involved in a federal change program in the United States. All three would probably have agreed that 'innovation' has something to do with *planned change* or *improvement* but disagreements may have emerged over the required degree of uniqueness of the change and certainly over what was involved in the *process* of innovation.

Apart from 'innovation', 'change' and 'improvement' some other words and phrases relevant to the Innovations Program were, 'initiate', 'creativity', 'local', 'new in context' ('reinventing the wheel', if necessary), and 'small scale'. On the other hand, a comparable list of terms with strong currency in the American literature were: 'adoption', 'diffusion', 'user', 'intervention strategies', 'targets', and so on. To use any of these other terms in discussing the Innovations Program would require redefinition to give them the appropriate connotation. This is more than a matter of semantics. As suggested above, the world of innovation in the United States in this period was a world of labelled 'packages' (ungraded classes, language laboratories and so on), focused upon education systems and school districts, involving 'users' or 'adopters', and thereby applying the 'research, development and diffusion' approach to the initiation of change. It was a world of delivery systems and the mass production of new 'products'. An innovation was very often a pre-packaged educational commodity which, partly because of its origin in the rationalistic world of a research and development 'laboratory', was something which was intended, at the outset, to be generalisable. In educational discourse a specific innovation was usually a change which was intended to be replicable. It had to have the potential for routinisation and therefore the capacity to be replicable and standardisable. As a substantial or even rational solution to a pervasive problem it had to be capable of adoption in most places where the problem existed. It followed that in this parlance an innovation was something that was initially external to the setting in which it would be adopted by the users. The intention to produce innovations with the capacity for replicability meant that their 'success' had to be judged by the degree to which they could be replicated and sustained. The more schools which adopted the innovation, sustained it, and built it into the school routine the more it was deemed to be successful. This was a product notion of innovation which suffered severely in terms of the problems relating to the process of implementation. The language of this world of innovation may not therefore be an appropriate language to describe changes which concern and involve particular groups of people - their ideas, their creativity, their inter-relationships - and which are therefore intimate and, to a certain extent, unique.

The problems of this particular approach, admittedly not the only one but seemingly dominant in the 1960's and 1970's, were summed up in another set of terms like, 'resistance', 'barriers', 'consonance', 'acceptance' and 'commitment'. The problem for externally proposed innovation was identified as one of diffusion and adoption.(6) Perhaps as a consequence the problems of implementation were given less than their due as is explained below.

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6. This point is made in both E.R. House, Op.cit., and Rand Studies, Op.cit.

Internal and External Forces for Change

The need for change can be generated inside or outside organisations. There is a tendency for the internal forces for change to be more likely to be adaptive rather than revolutionary, to produce variations rather than reorientations, and to be concerned with 'tuning' the institution or its practices rather than producing significant new arrangements.(7) The educational literature tends to promote the idea(8) that school people will support a steady-state condition (in its extreme form this might be interpreted to mean that the only substantial change in schooling can come from outside); that the parochialism of school communities veils perception of the need for change; that the 'regularities' in the culture of the school are inherently pervasive and persistent and hence conservative because they are the 'living' outgrowths of institutional traditions and often have moral implications attributed to them ('it's right because we've always done it that way'); that while education is direction-oriented schooling is activity-oriented (the activity might have only a tenuous connection with education: for example, the provision of homework for students is very much an unexamined habit which fulfils for many teachers and parents goals which are perhaps other than educational); that overall, schools are survival-oriented and will put the maintenance of safe and known approaches before the exploration of significant alternatives. It can be assumed from this that internally derived change will most likely work upon the regularities and functions of schools while external forces will make a greater impact upon changing aims and more particularly goals, or at least attempt to influence school communities to modify them. In those schools where consciousness of, and sensitivity to, practice is of a fairly high order regularities and functions will be under constant examination leading to the possibility of change and improvement. School-based change will be incremental but visible.

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7. E.R. House, Op.cit., pp. 50-60.

8. For example, J.I. Goodlad, Op.cit.

An American view which has prevailed for several decades is that the regularities of schools are so powerful (because school people accord them a rationality built upon time-honoured observance) that the people are rendered incapable of helping themselves. This view contributed to the widespread use of the research, development and diffusion model, sometimes characterised as 'answers in search of problems', and the associated 'adoption' perspective whereby exotic and highly rationalistic solutions were introduced into schools by change-agents/consultants who worked with the users (the teachers) to replace old approaches and routines with the new practices. Recent evidence (9) shows that the earlier perceived need to stimulate the adoption of innovation is not so much a problem, rather, many schemes for improvement are adopted, or designed, in schools but few appear to be effectively implemented. School people are receptive to the desirability and the possibility of change and considerable creativity, often undeveloped because of lack of experience, exists within schools. The evidence provided by the Innovations Program is substantial on this point. Still, the belief remains strong that significant changes in schooling will only be brought about by outside intervention.

While this belief may be unsubstantiated and may be rendered increasingly untenable as the people in school communities assert themselves, the RDD, 'top-down' or 'centre-periphery' models of innovation and change should not be discounted. In other places in this document it will be stressed that the grass-roots impetus to change which characterised the Innovations Program constitutes but one approach to change. To produce the maximum effect a strategy such as that of the Innovations Program should operate in harmony with other approaches so that the variations to school regularities and the reorientations in broader educational goals and arrangements can be effected, perhaps in conjunction. Clearly,

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9. Rand Studies, Op.cit., Volume IV, p. 25.

many significant and desired reorientations in education systems can only come about using wider and more direct action from sources external to the school. These may require either the initiative of government or the stewardship of the education authority. Such initiatives might include, for example, personnel policies, school architecture, organisational arrangements within systems, and new emphases relating to special populations. Even here, however, local level action may provide the catalyst for such large-scale change, or give impetus to it once initiated. In any event, the evidence produced in this section suggests that those proposing externally initiated change should give careful attention to the context into which the innovation is to be introduced and should be prepared to collaborate closely with the local people who will carry much of the responsibility for its implementation.

Emphasis on the Local Setting

There has been considerable criticism(10) of the RDD model characterised above, especially the diffusion element or the way in which the proposal is conveyed and introduced into the school or system setting. This external and rationalistic approach ignored to a great extent the local setting, its culture, the motivations of teachers and their capacities. The Rand study, while criticising the appropriateness of the research, development and diffusion model(11) utilised in federal change programs does not reject it but attempts instead to make it more workable by proposing the idea of 'mutual adaptation'. This, however, constituted a significant shift in approach away from the belief that an innovation adopted by a school but altered by the teachers may not have been 'properly' implemented. It recognised at least, that both project and setting might have to be modified to accommodate each other successfully. It followed that more attention should be focused on the implementation stage and perhaps less on the assumed problems of adoption.

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(10) E.R. House, Op.cit.

(11) Rand Studies, Op.cit., Volume IV, p. 25.

Michael Fullan(12) also moved this approach towards a wider, more realistic logic by his awareness of the gap between, on the one hand, the system administrator and the research and development establishment and, on the other, the teachers and students in schools. He acknowledged that many innovations were manufactured with little reference to the human world for which they were intended; that in this sense they were against culture and especially the culture of the school; that objective knowledge left little or no room for personal knowledge which was probably more potent in local settings. Although Fullan saw the people in and around schools as the key to the process of change, he was able only to describe them as 'users'. While 'users' could adopt, reject or transform, the term denied them the power to initiate and create.

Such criticisms produced a trend in the United States in the 1970's which involved a focus upon the school as the unit of innovation and increased recognition of the importance of school people in the successful implementation of innovative programs. The approach, expressed later in the California School Improvement Program, was promoted in particular by Goodlad(13) who sought recognition of the single school as the most appropriate basic unit to deal with efforts to effect educational change. Since then more attention has been given

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12. M. Fullan, 'Overview of the Innovation Process and the User.' Interchange. Vol. 3, Nos. 2-3, 1972. pp. 1-46.

13. J.I. Goodlad, 'The Individual School and Its Principal: Key Setting and Key Person', in Educational Leadership. October, 1965, pp. 2-6. Also in Australia by G.W. Bassett. See J.V. d'Cruz and P.J. Sheehan (eds), The Renewal of Australian Schools: A Changing Perspective in Educational Planning. ACER, Hawthorn, 1978. Ch. 13.

to the school as a social system; attention has been drawn to the culture of the school(14) and some emphasis has been given to school people 'doing their own thing'. Tye(15), an advocate of the single school as the unit of innovation, wrote that lasting educational change would only come about when practitioners saw themselves as change-agents. Bentzen, a collaborator with Tye, put forth the thesis that the adults in schools ultimately must learn to help themselves. This meant that they must strive together, preferably with students and parents, to make their settings for daily work better places for human beings to spend a large portion of each day. Bentzen concluded that for schools to change there had to be an internal process and a structure to support and sustain it. However, Bentzen appeared to remain faithful to the logic of an 'intervention strategy': the single school was seen as the 'target' to be worked upon. Each school was to be 'stimulated' and there was a desire to make changes 'stick' in a school after the experts (now facilitators and helpers) left. Nevertheless, the comment by Bentzen and Tye(16) that they had, 'come to the sober realisation that school communities - administrators, teachers, students and parents - must be encouraged and trusted to engage cooperatively and consciously in the process of coping with their own problems and hopes', moved American thinking and that arising from the Innovations Program closer together.

In developing the rationale of the Innovations Program caution was exercised in putting substantial faith in the school as the unit of innovation.(17) The emphasis was placed

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14. Sarason, Op.cit.

15. K.A. Tye and J.M. Novotney, Schools in Transition: The Practitioner as Change Agent. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1975, p. 2.

16. M. Bentzen and K.A. Tye, 'Effecting Change in Elementary Schools.' Seventy Second Year Book of NSSE. Chicago Press, 1973, p. 379.

17. It was only after some seven years of operation of the program that the Schools Commission proposed in its Report for the Triennium 1982-84 (Canberra, 1981) that a School Improvement Program replace the Innovations Program. The former was intended to encourage whole-school efforts to innovate and to improve schools as institutions, while recognising the considerable developmental tasks involved.

upon individuals and groups in school communities and in doing so the school context into which almost all projects funded under the program were placed was perhaps seriously underestimated, undervalued and underexploited. In this sense the criticisms applied to the external RDD model pertain also to the Innovations Program's approach. Further elaboration of this criticism is given in Part IV.

Innovation by Doing

Proposals for more diversified forms of schooling pose a challenge to Australian governments to relinquish the tight control represented in existing concepts of ministerial responsibility. They require greater dispensation of freedom to people at the local level and acknowledgement that freedom here might mean freedom denied elsewhere. They also require changes in teacher and community practice because both groups have for long played passive, receiving roles rather than those involving creative behaviour.

Such cultural changes demand time. Communities recognising the need for change are often impatient if the results are not quickly evident. Moreover, cultural change involves careful thought about the ways it can be instigated. Exhortation or the training of people for new roles outside their local contexts is often the approach first adopted but, as shown above, the results are poor. Perhaps the development of new capacities and practices and the adjustment of internal organisational relations and arrangements to cope with new situations can best be evolved slowly through the act of doing. Teachers and parents may best learn new roles by developing them in action. Systems of support for new practices in schools might best be generated out of need expressed in practical situations.

An explanation of the dynamics of change by doing is well illustrated in the writings of Paolo Friere.(18) Friere points out that the process of full human education rests at the cross point of action and reflection of men upon their world in order to change it. Education takes place when people are engaged in inquiry and the creative transformation of their world. Teachers can only learn new ways of expressing themselves and arranging their methods if they address their own present, concrete world. This problem-posing learning seeks the emergence of conscience (or awareness) in the learner which conditions attitudes and ways of behaving. Until the learner develops conscience and begins to work on his or her surroundings he or she will be mastered by them. This process involves the acquisition of cultural, political and technical sensibilities which turn problems into issues and issues into action. Friere believes that real education (for students, teachers and community people) is a process of drawing action out of thinking and involves critical intervention in the world. This thesis, if built into a change strategy involving people in schools, moves the approach to innovation and the change away from the research and development model and the intervention of experts among 'helpless' teachers. It is perhaps the way to act upon the growing mystique of organisational complexity and the associated claims of 'expertise' which beget alienation and helplessness in the community. The rationale of the Innovations Program adopted much of this approach.

Prospects for the Teacher

There is strong evidence(19) to suggest that teachers gain much of their satisfaction from their interactions in the

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18. P. Friere, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972.

19. W.J. Campbell et. al., 'Being a Teacher in Australian State Government Schools'. Report No 5, AACRDE, AGPS, Canberra, 1975, pp. 45-46.

teaching/learning process tempered by the knowledge, existing in the 1960's and early 1970's, that escape routes from the classroom were available when the work became tedious or no longer challenging. In recent times, fiscal policies associated with limited economic growth, reductions in the rate of government spending on schools, and the demographic downturn suggest that teachers will remain in current positions for longer periods as alternative opportunities for employment are closed off and the opportunity for teacher promotion is reduced. This poses the question of how to retain a sense of vitality and dynamism amongst teachers and hence morale.(20) A partial answer to this problem may be to stimulate further professional analysis of educational issues and to encourage more locally based creativity and action as was generated with the assistance of the Innovations Program.

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20. Rand Studies, Op.cit., Volume XIII, p. viii. The study indicates that the number of years of teaching has negative effects. The longer the teacher had taught the less likely was a project to achieve its goals, and the less likely was the project to improve student performance. Furthermore, teachers with many years on the job were less likely to change their own practices and less likely to continue using project methods after the end of federal funding. Experience associated with the Innovations Program shows that most teachers implementing projects were in their late twenties or thirties and had received at least one promotion; that is, to senior teacher.

PART II: THE NEED FOR CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

Change has become a complex feature of modern Australian society. Notions of 'progress' and 'improvement' are generally accepted though variously interpreted. The variety of interpretations reflects another important feature of the society - its growing diversity. Compared with the 1950's, the 1960's and 1970's were decades marked by a substantial growth in ethnic diversity and a widening of the range of social aspirations and lifestyles. The term multicultural came to be used to describe the increasing heterogeneity of Australia's population and culture. In educational terms the ethnic composition of many schools alone called for changes in curriculum, pedagogy, school organisation and school-community relations.

Underlying such broadly accepted notions of change and multiculturalism a number of other factors grew in prominence to confront schools and their communities: television as an alternative medium of education; the prospects of long-term unemployment for school leavers; the growing proportion of children from single-parent families; the increasing ideological cleavage between notions of social collectivism and the realisation of individual needs; the power of 'consumerism' as it applies to individual fulfilment; the role of the media and multi-national corporations in the development of a global culture; and the place of the individual in national and economic considerations and the attainment of satisfying individual goals within this framework. As the Schools Commission commented in its

Report for the Triennium 1979-1981, "... the schools can no longer confidently assert a single perspective on the world or a single view of the good life."(1)

There has always been a need for schools to improve their performance and for teachers to find better ways of fulfilling their roles. To these ever-present demands was added the search for new responses to a diverse social setting and adjustments to new and powerful economic and technological forces. The implications for schools of the changes going on about them included questions about their purpose, the nature of their curricula, the roles of people associated with them, and the forms of authority and control which could be exercised in relation to them.

The Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, which proposed the establishment of an Innovations Program, stated in its report(2) that it placed high value on the provision of resources in ways which would not simply perpetuate existing forms of schooling, but would stimulate among teachers and the community a search for forms of learning and of relationships between teachers and pupils more appropriate to the social and individual needs of Australians at that point in time. The Innovations Program was intended to provide a mechanism whereby schools and the people in schools could be assisted to tackle the many adjustments that new social and economic realities seemed to require.

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1. Australia. Schools Commission. Report for the Triennium 1979-81. Canberra, 1978. p.5 (hereafter referred to as, 'Report 1979-81').

2. Karmel Report, Op.cit., Para. 2.10.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Quantity and Quality

Between World War II and the early seventies when the Innovations Program was proposed, Australian education at the primary and secondary levels was characterised by a continuation of the pattern of control and organisation developed in the fifty years to 1945. The period was dominated by the effects of the post-war baby-boom and the advent of mass secondary education.

Educators and administrators, pressed by the sheer weight of numbers of children entering the schools, focused most attention on the acquisition of resources. In extending the provision of schooling, and in coping with the rapid increase in population of school-age, the modernisation of education involved quantitative factors such as the numbers of classrooms and teachers. A tradition emphasising equality of educational opportunity defined in terms of equal access to schools of roughly equal standards dominated the thinking of educational planners in Australia. One of the main outcomes of this strategy, however, has been a uniformity of approach. Australian government schools have been, and to some reduced extent still are, characterised by their uniformity. Improvements have tended to be initiated by state education authorities and have been imposed across the respective systems making them uniform in expression.

This uniformity in the provision of educational services came into contention in the 1960's and 1970's with an uncharacteristic degree of social and cultural instability and uncertainty. A widespread reassessment of education and schooling was commenced(3) with the object of achieving new relationships between a necessarily more dynamic set of educational purposes and the increasingly

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3. See for instance, Western Australia. Education Department. Secondary Education in Western Australia, Report of the Committee of Enquiry on Secondary Education in Western Australia. Perth, 1969.

diverse Australian cultural context. These assessments continued with increasing emphasis upon the qualitative aspects of educational provision.(4)

The Schools Commission's Innovations Program constituted a small, practical part of the movement to foster change leading to educational improvement. It operated on the assumption that better understanding about educational purposes and practices and improved and diverse forms of education and schooling would emerge from the recognition of people in local school communities as creators and implementors of new ideas.(5) If such an assumption was accepted then the strongly centralised, rationalistic and efficiency-dominated approach to education of past years(6) could give way to more humanistic, creative and involvement-centred relations between all those participating in the educational process. The focus on 'quality' would also be intensified and sharpened. These assumptions reflected a question which gradually moved towards centre-stage in the educational 'debate': who should define the nature, scope, content and methods of education?

Organisational Control and Change Strategies

In this century the six Australian states developed centralised systems of government primary and secondary education which cater for around eighty per cent of all school children. A less centralised Catholic sector serves most of the remaining twenty per cent and the balance (four per cent) attend private schools associated with the protestant churches, 'alternative' schools, and facilities for handicapped children.

About the turn of the century, perhaps Australia's most consciously egalitarian era, the state (public) education systems were established to achieve free, compulsory and secular

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4. Report 1979-81, Op.cit.
5. Karmel Report, Op.cit., Paras 2.1 ff.
6. B.K. Hyams and B. Bessant, Schools for People? An Introduction to the History of State Education in Australia. Longman, Camberwell, 1972, p. 183.

education for all children. These systems were characterised by

> "...a tradition of strong centralised control, with policies formulated by Departments of Education in each of the capital cities, implemented uniformly throughout each state by school inspectors acting as agents of the centralised administration..."(7)

The framework for Australian schooling for three-quarters of a century was established at this time and some eighty years of history now weigh heavily on the backs of educators and administrators keen to overhaul systems still substantially based upon the educational bureaucracies in each state capital city.

This central administrative apparatus and its peripatetic arm, the school inspector, produced a pattern of organisational constraint. For decades the approach to schooling was centrally determined and then monitored by the inspector. The teacher within very narrow limits exercised a discretionary influence on the curriculum which hardly acknowledged the claims he or she may have had to professional status, or sensitivity to the individual needs of the students. The curriculum was laid down by the central authority, the teacher's program for the year was 'approved' by the school principal and the inspector, and both were prepared before the teacher met the class. All students were assumed to be much the same everywhere. Opportunities for creativity and innovation rested mainly with the state education authority.

Since the 1960's particularly, new circumstances and emerging forces caused a significant relaxation of this tight, uniform approach. The development of mass secondary education and the new emphasis upon the learner rather than the instructor and the text book produced pressure for greater recognition of individual student differences and needs. The clear but uneven response which followed involved reforms in curriculum design, assessment procedures, and forms of grading. The growth in the size and consequently the impersonality of the education systems

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7. OECD/CERI. Creativity of the School, Programme Area III - Project I. G.R. Maddocks, 'Local and Regional Professional Support to the School.' Paris, 1974. p.3.

necessitated more decentralised administrative patterns and regional administrative frameworks emerged within the systems. Pre-service teacher education was gradually moved out of the hands of the employing authorities - the education departments - to independent, tertiary institutions and an incestuous form of teacher training was dismantled. Centralised curriculum development branches within state education departments gradually ceased to monopolise decisions about curriculum content and design. They were increasingly oriented to advise and assist the teacher-professionals. School inspectors shed, in most states, their former, largely incompatible roles of professional advisers and assessors of teacher performance.(8) The abolition of external examinations at certain points of secondary education in most states and their replacement by forms of school assessment further underlined the growing responsibility the community appeared prepared to place upon teachers in recognition of their emerging professional status. This increased freedom accorded the profession became also a burden and was not without its critics and problems.(9) Teachers and parents through their respective associations (in the case of teachers, through their industrial and professional associations which are not necessarily the same) asserted themselves increasingly in the 1960's and 1970's demanding more professional status for teachers, more resources for schools, greater participation of parents, but curiously less control of decision-making in education than might have been expected.

The implementation of these changes in the post-war era has followed closely the pattern of the past. For the most part they have been initiated and carried through by the education authorities themselves. They have provided, however, a context in which the initiative for change could move from the central authorities towards the professionals, the parents, and the

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8. However, principals still saw inspectors mainly as assessors of teachers. See M.C. Grassie, Australian Government Schools 1972-77, Principals' Report on Change. (No publisher, no date.) p. 119.

9. W.J. Campbell et.al., 'Some Consequences of the Radford Scheme for Schools, Teachers and students in Queensland'. AACRDE, Report No. 7, AGPS, Canberra, 1976. Ch. 24.

community, and the result has been more relative freedom allowing a greater range of decisions to be taken by those working in and around the schools.

THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Central Government and the States

The provision of primary and secondary education for the Australian community is complicated by the federal(10) nature of Australian politics. The constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia specifies the areas of responsibility of the central government and leaves open those of the states. Education is one area of social policy assumed to be a state prerogative,(11) but not exclusively.

The states are constitutionally responsible for determining the form of educational provision and the implementation of the service. The role of the central government is one of support and assistance most often in financial terms. This role is enhanced by the central government's sole power in relation to income tax, which in Australia is the main revenue source for government.

The involvement of the central government in education has grown in halting steps since World War II. In 1946 a referendum of all voters gave the central government power, among other things, to provide 'benefits to students', a legal point which coupled with Section 96 of the Constitution can assist the central government to make grants to the states for educational purposes. This period also saw the establishment

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10. The Commonwealth of Australia involves a federation consisting of the states and territories of Australia. The federation comprises a Commonwealth (national) parliament and sovereign state parliaments with their associated governments.

11. The government education systems in Australia are operated by state governments. Local government does not constitute a powerful entity and plays little part in the delivery of educational services.

of the Commonwealth (national) Office of Education (1945) which in 1972 became a fully-fledged central government department; the establishment of the first national commission on education - the Australian Universities Commission (1959); and the acceptance of the national Minister for Education as a full member of the Australian Education Council (1972), a national forum for the Ministers for Education. Central government funds began to flow in the form of 'Commonwealth Scholarships' to students in their last years of secondary schooling (1964), to both state education departments and non-government schools for science facilities (1964), and to the states as per-capita grants to non-government schools (1970). These initiatives established in practical terms the central government's interest in primary and secondary education, its capacity to make grants for these sectors, and set the precedents for an escalation of such involvement in the 1970's.

Central government funding of the states in education has probably been most controversial and potentially far-reaching in the area of its special purpose programs.(12) Through the provision of grants to the states of a specific purpose nature the central government can play an active role, influencing the direction of educational arrangements and practices. These specific purpose grants are directed at change and improvement in the quality of education, the way the service is delivered, and the roles played by teachers, students and parents in the delivery. They are proposed to and managed for the central government by its educational agencies (usually independent statutory authorities or commissions). The area of their application is in the schools and school systems of the states, both government and non-government. In summary, as a result of these initiatives, particularly since 1973, educational improvement has become a significant charge against central government funds and the direction of developments in education has become increasingly a matter of national as well as state concern.

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12. Apart from the financially large Capital and Recurrent Programs of the (Australian) Schools Commission, four special purpose programs involving grants to the states are concerned with teacher development, disadvantaged schools, special education, and special projects (innovations).

Seeking Improvement

The decade leading up to 1973 was a period of significant social change. Social aspirations and personal perspectives grew and expanded, tortured into focus for many by the Vietnam War, and were manifested in the growing unease of some and the disillusionment of others with broad areas of social policy and many social institutions. Education did not get off lightly. A new wave in the progressive education movement emerged in the late sixties nourished in part by the British Plowden Report (1967), and the writings of people such as Illich, Herndon, Kozol, Kohl, and Holt in the United States. The articulation of grievances against traditional schooling struck a chord with small, disparate groups of teachers, parents and pupils in all Australian states. The situation of the student in the educational process moved into sharper focus and with it the inadequacies of educational resource provision and the, allegedly, outdated pedagogical approaches employed. Widespread support emerged for more 'humanistic' education emphasising individualised learning and instruction, the emotional aspects of the curriculum, and an awareness of new social developments.

Politically powerful factors were emerging also through the strains placed upon the finances of the state education systems. The population boom of the fifties and its continuing effect into the sixties, and rising expectations about access for all to increasingly longer periods of education meant that the states were left with little surplus cash to finance the exploration of alternatives to long-established practices. This is not to say that the states have not made notable reorientations in the organisation of education over the years but where finance was involved a brake was placed upon the range of initiatives which could be undertaken.

The inadequacy of resource provision - expressed in high pupil-teacher ratios, extremely run-down or inadequate school plant and equipment, clearly evident inequalities in educational opportunity and the apparent poor performance of the schools (in 1972 only 32 per cent of pupils remained at school to Year 12(13) - the statistics were even more alarming when analysed against the socio-economic backgrounds of students(14))was the basis of complaint. Schooling in inner-city areas with high proportions of migrant, aboriginal, and white Australian working class children was inadequate. These criticisms applied particularly to broad areas of government and Catholic church-sponsored schooling which when combined enrolled some ninety five per cent of all students attending schools in the years of compulsory schooling, that is, roughly between five and fifteen years of age. Fortunately, the mounting criticism of the inadequacies of resource provision for primary and secondary education did not obscure the need for pedagogical and organisational improvements. In a way the work of the 'progressives' and those seeking improved 'basic skills' ensured that concern for the quality of teaching and learning would have a high priority in future government initiatives. By the beginning of the 1970's the electorate, the political parties, the education authorities, and the communities comprising the schools were becoming attuned to the need for change and the need for an expanded central government role in primary and secondary education.

The Advent of the Schools Commission

Of the two main political parties, the conservative Liberal Party and the somewhat more radical Labor Party, the latter responded more directly to the rising tide of criticism of schooling. On assuming power in December, 1972, a political victory underwritten to a considerable extent by its proposals to respond to these criticisms, the Labor government immediately established the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission.

The major term of reference of the Interim Committee was to make recommendations, "...as to the immediate financial needs of schools, priorities within those needs, and appropriate measures to assist in meeting those needs..."(15) The Committee was asked to take into account, "...the diversity of curricula to meet the differing aptitudes and interests of students..."(16) The call was made to devise ways and means of ensuring acceptable standards in schools and this was interpreted to mean qualitative changes as well as increased resources.

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(13) Schools Commission. Australian Students and Their Schools. Canberra, 1979. Table 3.30, p. 52.

(14) Karmel Report, Op.cit., Table 3.4, p. 18.

The Committee recommended that as a first step an additional $467 million (1972 prices) be injected into schools over two years (1974-75) through the establishment of seven programs to be administered by a new, independent statutory authority to be known as the Schools Commission. The bulk of the funds were to be dispersed on a 'needs' basis in the form of capital and recurrent grants. These funds were intended to supplement state and private expenditures particularly in the major areas of educational cost: buildings and teachers' salaries. At the same time the state authorities were to at least maintain their own expenditure efforts in real terms. This latter requirement was intended to provide the opportunity for central government funds to have an improvement orientation. Of the programs(17), which were to be special purpose in nature, the smallest, the one explicitly concerned with change and innovation, and the one to be directly administered by the Schools Commission itself, was the Special Projects Program.(18)

The report(19) of the Interim Committee for the Schools Commission having been accepted in total by the government, work commenced to implement the recommendations and to engage the co-operation of the state education authorities which for the first

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15. Ibid, Para. 1.1.
16. Ibid.
17. For example, the Teacher Development and Disadvantaged Schools Program.
18. The major element in this program was the provision of support for school-based innovation and change. This element was popularly known as the 'Innovations Program' and this term will be used in the text. The term, however, is something of a misnomer in that while supporting innovative projects the program also supported many that were simply improvement or change-oriented.
19. Karmel Report, Op.cit.

time in nearly a century were joined by a national agency responsible for advising the central government on the financing of schools and other matters pertaining to educational improvement. In succession an act of parliament was passed (December, 1973) establishing the Schools Commission(20) and another(21) (same date) made provision, accompanied by conditions, for the flow of funds to the states, utilising Section 96 of the Constitution for the purpose.

The Schools Commission's functions were to advise the national government, after consulting widely, on acceptable standards for physical and human resources in relation to all primary and secondary schools in Australia, the needs of all schools and the priorities to be set, the conditions to be applied to grants to the states for government and non-government schools, and "Any other matter relating to primary and secondary education in Australia..."(22) Among a range of matters, the Schools Commission was to have regard to "...the need to stimulate and encourage diversity and innovation in education, in schools, and in the curricula and teaching methods of schools..."(23)

One of the advantages of a central government educational effort operating alongside state education authorities is that the establishment of priorities by the former can have a powerful influence on the directions taken and the emphases placed by the latter (and of course, vice versa). For instance, the prominence of innovation based upon local initiative(24),

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20. Australia. Schools Commission Act No. 213 of 1973.
21. Australia. States Grants (Schools) Act 1973.
22. Schools Commission Act No. 213 of 1973, pp. 6-7.
23. Ibid, p. 7.
24. Several Australian states and the Australian Capital Territory have, since 1974, operated their own small 'innovations' or local curriculum development programs, perhaps stimulated by the central government initiative. These programs resemble the Innovations Program in terms of support for local initiative and in the emphasis upon innovation and quality in applications, however, the funds available to them are more restricted (e.g. $80,000 per year), areas of subject priority are given and the notion of counsellor support is not developed. In some instances people funded by these programs subsequently sought support from the Innovations Program as their efforts became more ambitious.

special concern for the disadvantaged, the effects of sex-role stereotyping and equality of opportunity as between boys and girls, and the desirability of greater school and community interaction were examples of Schools Commission priorities backed by special purpose funds which evoked positive responses at the state and local levels. This is not to say that they were not matters of some moment before the advent of the Schools Commission but they were given, as a result, a weighting, a profile and a sum of practical activity quite formidable by the standards of earlier years. In this practical way through initiatives from one level of government supported by degrees of receptivity at other levels, innovative efforts can be reinforced and a national consensus can have the opportunity to emerge.

THE INNOVATIONS PROGRAM: GENESIS

Background

Educational innovation can be complex, controversial and difficult to implement. It involves change and divergence in a key area of social policy which embraces the nation's children. Its capacity for politicisation within the educational community and in the wider society is therefore predictable.

Schools and teachers are accorded two difficult tasks which often conflict when educational innovation is broached. On the one hand schools are asked to serve the maintenance needs of society and on the other they are increasingly being required to carry much of the burden of accommodating new generations to ever-changing social, technological and economic situations.

In the 1970's, there were those who would have resolved social and economic dilemmas by strengthening and reinvigorating past practices. Others would have been rid of outmoded approaches to living and learning. In one sense this conflict of opposites was illusory. Both viewpoints expressed dissatisfaction with the prevailing conditions; lay people of a wide range of persuasions vented their spleen about the inadequacies of the 'education system' and even professional educators admitted that schools could do better. The point of commonality was dissatisfaction and the resolution of that dissatisfaction rested in change. While the proponents of these disparate solutions to educational difficulties wrestled with each other over such matters as forms of school financing, acceptable core curricula, and student discipline the case for educational change was being established. The dialectic became more apparent than real, or at least severely muted, when it was acknowledged that education could offer no one path to salvation but that different paths might provide particular solutions to particular needs.

The birth of the Innovations Program reflected this understanding and was a response to it. The Schools Commission and the Innovations Program were born out of an educational 'crisis' of the sixties and seventies: dissatisfaction with both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of schooling and a realisation that a complex, modern society could no longer accept singular, across-the-board solutions to all educational problems.

The report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, Schools in Australia in May 1973, the establishment of the Schools Commission in December, 1973 and with it implementation of the Innovations Program were far from being accidents of history or products of political gimmickry. The motivation for these developments was based in community desire to improve the performance of schooling. Improvement was to lead to a strengthening of the social goal of equality of opportunity through diversification in teaching methods, school organisation and curricula. By fostering an innovative climate in schools two major objectives, those of diversifying school offerings and increasing the quality of school services, were to be pursued. Although the Committee appreciated that its power was limited because it did not administer schools, nevertheless it recognised that its recommendations would have clear implications for the future and would influence the direction of developments.

The framework of values set out by the Committee was laden with meaning for those charged with the task of implementing the Innovations Program. The principle values were: Devolution of Responsibility, Diversity, Community Involvement, Expansion of Educational Goals while Maintaining the Special Purposes of Schools, Equality, A Dual Education System of Government and non-Government Schools, and Recurrent Education. Of these, not necessarily in order of priority, the first four had special application to the Innovations Program.

In the words of the Committee,

> "Responsibility should be devolved as far as possible upon the people involved in the actual task of schooling, in consultation with the parents of the pupils whom they teach and, at senior levels, with the students themselves. Its belief in this grass-roots approach to the control of the schools reflects a conviction that responsibility will be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with making decisions are also the people responsible for carrying them out, with an obligation to justify them, and in a position to profit from their experience."(25)

This did not mean, however, that some centrality of organisation and administration would not be required for the effective, efficient and egalitarian provision of some key services. Another implication was that opportunities would need to be provided for parents and the community at large to increase their competence to participate in the control of schools.

As to Diversity the Committee placed,

> "...high value on the provision of resources in ways which will not simply perpetuate existing forms of schooling, but will stimulate among teachers and the community a search for forms of learning and of relationships between teachers and pupils more appropriate to the social and individual needs of Australians at this point in time. No single pattern is necessarily the

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25. Ibid, Para. 2.4.

> best; diversified forms of schooling are an important part of the search for solutions. Increased resources made available to the schools will not necessarily result in children either learning better or being happier in them. Better ways will not necessarily be the same for all children or for all teachers. This is an important reason for bringing responsibility back into the school and for allowing it to be exercised in ways which enable a hundred flowers to bloom rather than to wither. All-round improvements are more likely to emerge from experimentation with different approaches than from centralised manipulation of change. Given that people in the schools and the communities which they serve are different, a uniform pattern of change which, by its nature, will generally favour low risk as against high risk experimentation, is unlikely to be appropriate everywhere."(26)

Two factors appear to have particularly motivated the Committee's approach to the role of the community in education. Both factors were interlocked and involved an increased social purpose for schooling together with an assumption that the rough consensus about the essential purposes of schools would become increasingly strained. The environment of flux and uncertainty outlined earlier led the Interim Committee to say:

> "The very fabric of schooling - its patterns of control and organisation, as well as the outcomes it should seek and the method by which it should pursue them - is in question."(27)

In such circumstances parent and community (neighbourhood) involvement in determining the nature, scope and practice of education in schools would become important. In the Australian context movements in this direction would be seen as being highly innovative:

> "The isolation of schools is being questioned, as is also the idea that education should be confined to formal institutions and concentrated heavily upon those who have not yet entered employment."(28)

The possibilities of expanding areas of non-formal education and breaking down the relatively rigid line (or barrier) of demarcation between schools and other educational agencies and

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26. Ibid, Para. 2.10.
27. Ibid, Para. 2.1.
28. Ibid, Para. 2.15.

efforts was presaged. Later the legislation giving effect to the Schools Commission's programs recognised the innovative possibilities of this observation by empowering the Schools Commission to approve

> "...special experimental project(s) in connexion with any matter relating to primary and secondary education..."(29)

In terms of stretching conceptions of what constituted 'good' education and the ways it could be implemented the Innovations Program was thus given a broad canvas to traverse. The provision enabled the program to work on two additional assertions of the Committee. These were that,

> "Unless our conception of education broadens to enable schools to forge closer links with other socialising agencies, the possibility of providing equal life chances for children from all types of social backgrounds is severely limited.", and,

> "Antipathy towards and apathy about direct community participation in the governance of schooling is widespread throughout Australia. Schools have much to gain from the involvement of the community in educational programs."(30)

Finally, as a corrective to any impression that it had foresaken the special and perhaps coincidentally traditional purposes of schooling, for example, intellectual development and the transmission and acquisition of knowledge, the Committee reiterated its belief

> "...that schools have distinctive functions for which no other institution in society is specifically responsible, it is considered important that these functions be not only retained but exercised with increasing success."(31)

The Innovations Program was thus to be as concerned with 'basic skills' as it might be with the extra-curricular elements of school programs.

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29. States Grants (Schools) Act 1973, Part VIII, Section 52(1), p. 40. (Underlining inserted.)

30. Karmel Report, Op.cit., Paras 2.17 and 2.19.

31. Ibid, Para. 2.21. (Underlining inserted).

The foregoing can be illustrated by the following perspective. It starts with the purposes of education mentioned earlier. Although an identifiable core culture and set of values existed in the 1970's the core was probably smaller than ever before but included belief in parliamentary democracy, the family unit, personal attributes such as honesty and integrity and so on. Even so these values and core elements were interpreted very differently by people and were becoming more dependent on context and circumstance rather than being unquestioned, absolute values carrying singular meanings. When related to the purpose of education and schooling the so-called core culture and core values did not preclude considerable disputation and confusion, particularly as the focus was sharpened and the aims of education were made increasingly explicit. This fragmentation of outlook produced a situation where few people were happy with what schools did.

Schools were also increasingly accorded a social purpose - they were perceived to be institutions which could or should ameliorate, cure or prevent most of society's ills. Those people with a traditional view of the purpose of education and schooling, that is, intellectual development, called for more attention to the academic subjects; those seeking to reinvigorate the traditional core values called for greater family-life and moral education; others concerned with the school's obligation to social betterment called for the introduction of political knowledge, sex education, environmental education, and so on. As this situation developed politicians, central planners, educators and administrators saw themselves caught up in a no-win situation if they tried to unilaterally mediate what were becoming in part irreconcilable positions in the community. How then to retain the unity of purpose and values within the context of much more diversity?

A trend which emerged in most states during the seventies was towards devolution of authority. Devolution involved two concepts which did not necessarily complement each other. On the one hand it included administrative decentralisation (regionalisation) whereby the unwieldy centralised organisational arrangements of state Education Departments were broken up into more manageable units which helped to deflect local problems and political flak away from Central Office and the Minister. Such regional units were also better placed to deal with school administration, to cope with local problems and to impose their will upon school communities, if required. On the other hand, devolution included the dispersal of power over educational policy towards the school level. This more radical form of devolution focusing on the governance of schools was much slower to materialise although it was eventually reflected in Victoria's school councils and the Australian Capital Territory's school boards. Arguments in favour of this type of devolution included the desirability of schools reflecting local community needs and perhaps offering a range of curricular, pedagogical and organisational choices more suited to expressed local needs. The view expressed in the Karmel Report was that such devolution was an important element in any school improvement strategy. The Innovations Program by focusing on the individuals and groups within school communities and supporting their practical responses to the needs of their schools expressed this concept of devolution.

Devolution in terms of governance, policy-making and management was more easily contemplated than implemented. There were functional and attitudinal factors to be considered. Powers could be handed over to regions, schools and communities and some immediate action could be taken. But broad patterns of local participation had to emerge if local management and decision-making was to be in any way democratic. Skills involved in participation, planning and formulation of options had to be developed together with the development of the capacities to implement plans. Increased local initiative leading to a wider range of choices was seen as the way to accommodate different views and cultural patterns and would also facilitate a tighter 'fit' between aims, practices and outcomes: values, curriculum and teaching methods. It was an improvement-oriented approach for the present and a mechanism of adaptation for the future. The accumulation of local skills derived from ongoing participation in resolving problems and designing solutions, the development of approaches to management which placed emphasis upon building the means of supporting local initiative were strategies which could only be put in place progressively. The Innovations Program was seen by the Commission as an element in this approach to cultural development and educational devolution.

Realisation of the directly stated values of the Interim Committee entailed such divergence from existing organisational patterns and practices in Australian education as to call for a major, innovative effort. They were values which even prior to the Committee's existence, were becoming incorporated in the rhetoric of educational reformers in Australia. There was thus significant if limited support for their implementation. As both the Committee and the educational reformers were aware, the 'world' might be interpreted in various ways but the point was to change it. Devolution of decision-making, sharing of power, establishing linkages between educators and lay people, invoking the professionalism of the teaching service to select and implement a range of solutions involved cultural changes of some magnitude. By their nature such changes required time for people to unlearn old patterns of behaviour and adopt new ones. They could not be established by administrative fiat or homilies from influential individuals or organisations. The task demanded essentially that people reshape their educational environments by doing and learning at the same time. The Committee saw locally based action as an essential solvent of outdated and irrelevant methods and attitudes. The Innovations Program was envisaged as a catalyst and provider of resources for change and experimentation at the level where a major part of the process of education is played out and where professionals and clients interact in direct and practical ways. A high point of professional activity for the teacher and a means for the involvement of lay people in education was conceived as the planning and implementation of educational innovation.

Fostering Change

To the Interim Committee Australia's schooling problems demanded improvement which meant change, part of which would involve innovation. Change and innovation in accordance with the Committee's stated values were to be fostered not imposed. The scope of innovation was left undefined as well as its particularities. The ferment and uncertainty in the Australian community, the magnitude of the social and economic revolution through which Australia was moving and the desire to shift the locus of decision-making power closer to the local level led the Committee to avoid prescriptive answers.

A key operational feature of the Innovations Program involved the view that individuals, groups and communities should define innovations according to their needs and aspirations -

> "...enhancing and exploiting the capacities of committed people to generate their own improvements."(32)

The responsive character of the program was thereby established. From its inception the program dwelt heavily on human interaction in all its practices and processes -

> "The Committee holds the view that interaction among colleagues is vital if the will of the profession to innovate and to bring about beneficial change is to be strengthened."(33)

In the implementation of the program the view was taken that Innovation could not be divorced from its context. In the words of a later Schools Commission report:

> "The criterion (for selecting projects for support) has been that there seems to be a reasonable chance that through the project these people, in this situation, will produce, directly or indirectly, worthwhile improvement in the education of these children."(34)

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32. Op.cit., Para. 12.2.

33. Ibid, Para. 12.6. (Underlining inserted.)

34. Australia. Schools Commission. Report for the Triennium 1976-78. AGPS, Canberra, 1975 (hereafter referred to as 'Report for 1976-78').

If in some situations it was necessary to 'reinvent the wheel' then so be it. The import of this radical departure from previous change strategies in Australian education was that change in this program should not be approached from within a bureaucratic framework but in a highly personalised way.

One of the several assumptions which underlay the conception of the program and was reflected in the Committee's report refers to problems inherent in Australia's educational bureaucracies. They are, perhaps of necessity, large and inflexible. Their raison d'etre leads to the imposition of rules and methods of operation from above. They are charged with the task of delivering a service with scarce resources and their funds are almost always committed ahead and consequently expenditure is locked into existing patterns. Under these circumstances it is paradoxically a relative simple matter to authorise change but not so easy to successfully implement it. In the Committee's view another strategy had to be called into existence to redress the relative incapacity of the old.

The Committee also felt that projects of improvement in schools and school systems had been relatively ineffectual not only because of the inadequate involvement of those people most directly affected but also because of a lack of resources. A grants program paying close attention to the

> "...dynamics of change in the complex social systems which schools are..."(35)

was seen as a means of giving power to people to generate their own improvements through the attainment of the financial capacity to acquire the necessary resources.

The chapter, Fostering Change, of the Interim Committee's report was, in a sense, only the first word in the development of the Innovations Program even though the program was based on the broad strategy it established. It provided a new orientation in thinking about the source of, and impetus for, change in

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35. Ibid, Para. 12.3.

Australian primary and secondary education.(36)

The report offered the following suggestions about possible strategies and administration for the program. The program would be independent of school authorities (but nevertheless seek their support and cooperation); it would be administered by the Schools Commission itself on a national basis; it would deal with school level, teacher and associated community oriented initiatives producing practical changes and innovations of direct concern to students; it would not seek to determine the nature of any change but would respond to and support worthwhile proposals generated by those at or near the 'chalk-face'. The program, although administered by the Schools Commission, would be developed through the advice of a national committee which would advise "...on the preparation of proposals and their evaluation and, in some instances, could act as a catalyst."(37) It was also suggested that the committee might be assisted by "...consultants located strategically across the country."(38) Last, three levels or types of grants were envisaged: for school level, systems level and national level projects.(39)

The chapter ended with the following:

> "The Committee believes that there is a critical need for a massive effort to raise the quality of schooling by fostering change and diversity. The funds required for the purpose are likely to be considerable, but the structures necessary for the stimulation, administration and evaluation of innovatory projects will take some time to build to full strength. For this reason the Committee is proposing a relatively modest beginning."(40)

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36. Grants programs in Australian education pre-dated the Innovations Program, even at the school level; for example, the grants awarded by the now defunct National Committee for Social Science Teaching. In scale and conception, however, the Innovations Program constituted a new phenomenon.

37. Karmel Report, Op.cit., Para. 12.17.

38. Ibid.

39. Subsequently, in 1976, the Special Projects Program was to be split into two parts: the school level Innovations Program and the Special Projects (Areas of Interest) Program. Both were subsumed under the title Special Projects Program, mainly for legislative purposes. The latter sub-program included both 'systems' (grants to education authorities) and 'national level' projects.

40. Karmel Report, Op.cit., Para. 12.18.

An amount of $6 million was initially recommended for allocation to the program for the calendar years 1974-75.

PART III: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

IMPLEMENTATION

People in the Process

The ingredients of the mix that made up the Innovations Program were: people, particularly the students, teachers and those working in and around schools, their neighbourhoods and communities; ideas generated out of the local needs of these people; and assistance, sometimes in the form of money but often in terms of the provision of in-kind resources or personal help. Of the three, people were deemed to be of greatest importance. They included those with ideas wanting to try them out, those without ready solutions who nevertheless perceived problems and expressed the desire to counter them, colleagues and neighbours who could provide help (or obstruction), superiors who had the power to facilitate the implementation of ideas, the Innovations Program's personnel especially the counsellors who, in a variety of ways, could help to stimulate an idea and assist in its carriage from conception to implementation, and finally, of equivalent importance to the proponent of an idea, the students(1) who experienced the impact of the project. As the program model developed the institutional setting and the culture of the school became increasingly recognised considerations in ensuring effective implementation of ideas.

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1. Students were encouraged (but not systematically) to become the proponents of projects and the recipients of grants.

Aims, Values and Priorities

The Schools Commission established the following general aims(2) for the Innovations Program:

- to improve the quality of schooling in Australia;
- to encourage diversity and stimulate innovation in schools and systems;
- to enhance and make use of the capacities of committed people - pupils, parents, teachers, employers and the community at large - to generate their own improvement in schools.

These aims were to be achieved by

- providing the resources necessary for the success of innovatory projects;
- helping to create an organisational climate congenial to change;
- providing avenues of communication between innovators, teachers generally, and others concerned with schools;
- disseminating information about innovations to teachers, authorities, parents, students and the general public;
- providing advice and practical assistance to innovators.

Underpinning the aims were the general goals and values of the Commission.

- Diversity - to stimulate among teachers and the community a search for forms of learning and of relationship between teachers and pupils more appropriate to the social and individual needs of Australians at this point in time;
- Equality - to attempt to provide a more equal opportunity for all children to participate more fully in the society as valued and respected members of it;

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2. The following aims and their methods of achievement are contained in Schools Commission Circular 4, January, 1974 and in later versions of Schools Commission, Guidelines for Applicants (Innovations Program).

- Devolution of Responsibility - to provide greater opportunities for parents and the community at large to increase their competence to participate in the control of schools;
- Community Involvement - to provide opportunities for experimentation in the development of school-community relationships;
- Special Functions of Schools - to reserve and extend the special functions of schools for which no other institution is specifically responsible;
- Recurrent Education - to extend the possibilities of recurrent, or lifelong, learning.

Following the Commission's Report for the Triennium 1976-78 (July, 1975) these goals and values of the Commission were restated in the document Innovations Program: Guidelines for Applicants as three main themes which were endorsed by the government in subsequent reports:

- Equality - the Commission places emphasis on more equal outcomes from schooling, laying particular stress on social group disparities and attempts to mitigate them, and on social changes and their effects. Schooling should provide equal access to occupational and life options. Not only should it provide for a greater range of needs than at present, but also more children must be enabled to gain the basic competencies that allow them to achieve power over the circumstances of their own lives;
- Open Attitudes - the Commission seeks to encourage more open attitudes to educational questions, organisations and structures. If the diverse needs of children and society are to be more adequately catered for, there needs to be an acceleration of the process of 'opening up' the school, to make it more flexible, more accessible, more outgoing in its preparedness to relate to the realities of the community. Changes are required to make possible a greater degree of choice both within and

between schools. Institutional boundaries and functions should not be regarded as immutable;

- The School and the Community - the Commission asserts that the needs of children will be more effectively met and the desired outcomes of schooling more effectively achieved if more decisions are made at regional and school levels and if the community which the school serves participates in the decisions.

While emphasising that the program since its inception had been primarily concerned to respond to initiatives and that the process of appraising applications had taken careful account of the values and principles of the Commission, the Report (1976-78) went on to state that,

> "The Commission believes that this concern with values in the selection of projects should continue and in addition the program should take account of particular national needs which require action in certain priority areas."(3)

The mention of priority areas had implications for the response nature of the program and the power of individuals to 'generate their own improvement in schools'. The priority areas and their implications for the program's strategy and direction will be discussed below.(4)

The Commission expected that school level projects would involve action at the work-face, that is, require the actual implementation of new processes. Moreover, projects given support were expected to be of practical benefit to a particular group of children, teachers, or parents. Funds in support of projects were to be provided for a limited period of time, usually two years and were to be payable to the actual proponent of the idea and the project. While most projects

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3. Report 1976-78, Op.cit., Para. 17.6.

4. See p. 85 ff, Part III.

would be of short duration, and this time-scale certainly applied to the period of the Commission's involvement, some projects could be judged likely, after at most a few years, to become either self-supporting, eligible for funding under another of the Commission's programs, or else be able to continue with support from others.(5)

In short the program would have immediate and longer-term perspectives: students were to be the immediate beneficiaries of most projects; individuals and groups at the local level would be assisted to become more sensitive and creative in their environments by being more able and confident in identifying problems and devising and implementing solutions. With a cumulative and longer term perspective it was anticipated that education 'systems' as a whole would encourage in-built, ongoing capacities for creativity, problem-solving and adaptation, especially at the local level.

Innovation in Context

The Innovations Program was as much concerned with process as it was with product. As the Interim Committee's report emphasised, greater concern must be accorded the "...dynamics of change in complex social systems..."(6) The program's attention to people also underlined the importance of starting where people were 'at'. Teachers, administrators, students, parents and community groups, it was recognised, were spread out along a wide spectrum of professionalism, commitment, understanding and involvement as it applied to the educative process.

The program did not focus attention solely on vanguard ideas. Many projects could have been viewed as unexceptional. Nevertheless, such projects were assessed as significant to

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5. Some provision was made in special circumstances for 'further funding' of projects by the Innovations Program. See p.114, Part III and p.152 ff, Part IV.

6. Karmel Report, Op.cit., Para. 12.3.

the people involved and usually also for the curriculum of the school in which they were to be implemented. Variations to practice rather than major reorientations of approach were more often expressed in funded projects; small-scale projects stimulating people to relate to one another predominated over attempts at major structural changes, and in the long-term the former process was judged to be the best solvent of crusty structures. This approach was a crucial feature of the program: innovation or improvement in context. It is in these terms that the concept 'innovation' must be discussed when examining the rationale and strategy of the program. It was probably only in this way that the process of adoption or replication was acknowledged. Projects were devised by the people 'on the spot' to meet identified local needs - the ideas could have been original or adopted, but implementation was more often a unique process.(7) Projects were not always planned and implemented with the intention of establishing a product that might be transferable to other settings. Most were highly situation-specific because they were people-centred and accorded closely with the characteristics of the people in the immediate environments: their personalities, strengths, weaknesses, professional capabilities and general orientations and needs. Hence the process involved in 'innovating' was just as important as the project objective.

'Innovation in context' gave rise to the need for on-site, face-to-face appraisal of projects and their environments by counsellors because no other method was believed to be sensitive enough to produce adequate assessments of the psychological and social factors on which the success or failure of the innovation would often depend - such factors as the 'atmosphere' of the school, the strength of local support, and the quality of the leadership available. This approach could be taken as the centrepiece of phase one of the program - a phase of perhaps several years' duration involving a significant cultural emphasis.

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7. The proponents of projects were more than 'users', a term often applied to school personnel implementing innovations in the North American literature; they were creators as well as adoptors and managers.

Other Main Features of the Innovations Program

The Innovations Program was a national program. It operated in each state, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory and was open to people in all schools and communities. The program was administered directly by the Schools Commission because it was an entity, an integrated package of strategies directed at the encouragement and support of change in primary and secondary education. Even though each state and territory had its Innovations committee and counselling group and considerable responsibility was vested in these groups, the funds were not allocated on a per capita basis to the states. Nor were the state groups able to unilaterally overturn the essential features and strategies of the program. Nevertheless, within these constraints the program did have a different complexion in each place so that it accorded with local peculiarities.

The program was based upon action-research - 'doing' - rather than theoretical research. Research or data collection was rarely supported. Field-based action with direct connexion to the learners was heavily emphasised although action at the work-face did not have to be interpreted as that which occurred only in schools among those whose age conformed to conventionally held notions of primary and secondary age-groups. The program was therefore directed towards people closely associated with the day-to-day activities of primary and secondary education rather than, for instance, tertiary researchers. It was a projects and 'process' program whose preoccupation was not with theoretical understanding about the process of innovation or innovative ideas divorced from the practicalities of development and implementation.

The program was concerned with primary and secondary education rather than a narrow definition of schooling. The program was designed to test and stretch the 'boundary skin' of conventional notions of 'school' and 'education'.

The program was independent of all education authorities administering schools. Inevitably this feature generated tension since the program was not owned and controlled by education authorities.

They had the power to prevent it from operating in their schools but aside from this it had the capacity to support people, ideas and projects that might otherwise not be recognised. The program's independence was an essential feature of its capacity to support real change. The tension it developed was, for the most part, a creative tension. While not eroding its independent ability to support projects judged worthwhile, forms of liaison were established between the program and the major education authorities to ensure that destructive situations were minimised and projects were implemented with the highest level of support.

The program's organisation was built around the role of the counsellor.(8) These were people involved part-time who had an interest in educational innovation and a commitment to it. They comprised teachers, administrators, tertiary educators and community people. They were the human face of the program and the essence of its social interaction process. The counsellors were not styled as experts; they had a multiplicity of roles. Individual counsellors varied as to the number of roles they were able to perform but overall they were expected to be stimulators, helpers, communicators and appraisers. They had to be able to relate to people in a sympathetic and understanding way, even if they disagreed with an idea or the way in which it was to be implemented. Counsellors could perform a variety of tasks at a number of points between the stimulation and conception of an idea, its implementation, and the conclusion of the project. A detailed explanation of the counsellor's role and work is set out on p. 61 ff, Part III.

The Beginnings of the Innovations Program (1974-75)

There was initially some criticism of the speed with which the Innovations Program, like the Commission itself and its other programs, was launched. Some would have preferred a more sedate beginning for the program. Their main concern was

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8. In 1976 the term 'consultant' was changed to 'counsellor' to avoid confusion with the conventional notion of consultant in the Australian Public Service and because the latter term more accurately expressed the characteristics of such people in the program.

that money was being dispersed in a haphazard way, diminishing its impact and the resulting educational benefits that might have accrued from a more thorough preparatory working-up period. Such criticism ignored a factor unforseen by almost everyone - the response from people in schools.

Advertisements inviting applications for grants were placed in the national and local press in January 1974. An initial trickle of applications built up very quickly. After the first 100 grants were offered and publicised in May, 1974 the program was inundated with applications. Interest in the program did not abate. Its first manifestation in 1974 put an unexpected degree of pressure on the program's administrators. The decision of the Commission to quickly launch the program was justified by the public response. The Interim Committee's report had captured the imagination of most educators. The period 1973-74 was a time of high expectation coloured with a sense of urgency. A long gestation period of organisational planning might have eroded this enthusiasm and goodwill. There were many benefits in this decision most importantly that the program was moulded and adjusted in the light of experience. In a sense its functional development preceded the establishment of a formal structure which came later. As a result the enthusiasm of clients was not dissipated by the delay in putting the program into place.(9) Moreover, the lack of appropriate foreign models coupled with a growing distaste for imported solutions to educational problems led to the design of the program resting upon Australian ingenuity tempered by an awareness of failed initiatives in other countries.

Initial Organisation

The period 1974-75 constituted a clear first phase in the program's organisational development. Following the establishment of the overall design the program strategy took further shape out of a melting pot of ideas and

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9. Delays in processing applications did occur throughout 1974 though not to the extent suggested by one applicant who felt that the assessment of an application for $10,000 and its payment could be accomplished in a week. Such delays were caused as much by the volume of applications as they were by procedures requiring fine-tuning or the detailed assessments undertaken.

initial on-the-ground experiences. Commissioners, members of the Commission's secretariat, members of the newly appointed state and territory consulting groups, and interested outsiders(10) all contributed to the ferment of ideas, strategies and tactics. The structural pillars erected in those early days reflected faithfully the limited brief of the Interim Committee and remained to underpin the program thereafter.

Concurrently with the ongoing development of the program's features applications were received and processed(11) and the administrative aspects of the program such as the payment of grant arrangements, contractual details and a host of lesser issues were put in working order. On reflection it is difficult to imagine how the program could have been set in motion as quickly and relatively effectively as it was without these tasks being implemented concurrently. The program's focus on such a small unit as a teacher in a system imbedded in a federal political structure, coupled with the participatory model of decision-making adopted, produced an organisational and administrative situation of considerable complexity. The detail to be considered in individual applications (project rationale, budget items, costing, copyright, employment of staff, implications of erecting buildings, sales tax, public liability insurance, financial accountability, and so on) was often complex requiring the clarification of procedures and the building of sets of 'case law' relevant to different state situations.

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10. These people, too numerous to mention, represented a range of educational interest: people from state Education Departments, the non-government school sector, tertiary institutions, parent and teacher organisations, and the community.

11. The closing date for receipt of the first round of applications was 28 February, 1974. Some 1000 applications were received for this round. A subsequent advertisement invited applications the closing date for which was June 30, 1974 and 1300 applications were received. The enormous response put pressure on the Commission to continue receiving applications to avoid a loss of momentum and enthusiasm and to avoid disappointing hundreds of people.

Committees and Counselling Groups(12)

The earliest paper (13) on the organisation of the Innovations Program spelt out a range of principles and proposed arrangements. First, the organisation of the program was to be decentralised as far as possible. Second, those who were actually involved in introducing innovations or actively involved in stimulating or encouraging them would as far as possible be those involved in making decisions about the program. Third, in each state and territory an Innovations committee would be formed to carry out, in association with members and officers of the Commission, the following functions:

- stimulate and encourage innovations generally;
- periodically review attempts at innovation;
- as far as possible, maintain contact with, and provide advice to, innovators and potential innovators;
- help to maintain communications between those involved in innovation;
- assist applicants in making applications for grants;
- assist with initial processing of applications;
- nominate one member to the National Innovations Committee.

The committees were to be formed by obtaining suggestions for membership from commissioners resident in the state concerned, education authorities, teacher and parent organisations, university and teachers' college staffs and teachers involved in innovation.

Membership of each state committee was to include a commissioner, an officer of the state Education Department and of the Catholic Education Office and was to cover the primary and secondary education sectors and government and non-government

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12. These groups were known as 'consulting groups' and counsellors were known as 'consultants' until 1976. For consistency the terms 'counselling groups' and 'counsellors' are used throughout.

13. Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission. Working paper. November, 1973. (Unpublished).

school areas. A significant proportion of each state committee was to consist of teachers, members of parent and community groups actually involved in innovations and persons experienced and (or) actively involved in stimulating and encouraging innovations.

A National Innovations Committee was to be created with responsibility for the general oversight of the Innovations Program. Its functions would be similar to those outlined for state committees but for application at the national level. Its important responsibilities would be to make recommendations to the Commission concerning grants for Innovations projects and in relation to general policy development and the allocation of funds.

The membership of the National Innovations Committee was to consist of a commissioner as chairperson, two part-time commissioners, one member chosen from the Innovations committee in each state and territory and up to three other members nominated by the Commission.

Part-time counsellors were also to be appointed in each state and territory to assist the local committees with their tasks as outlined above.

A three tiered structure was thus proposed: national committee, local committees, and counselling groups. In large measure the membership at each level was to be obtained from the people at the lower level. The majority of people appointed at each level were to be selected from those directly involved in innovative activity at the local level. All personnel were to be encouraged to participate in the program's development as well as in the day-to-day activities associated with it. The emphasis on social interaction in program activities was made clear.

The full organisational framework proposed in December, 1973 was either not immediately implemented or actually formalised. For instance, state and territory Innovations committees were not established by the Minister for Education until April, 1976. The main reason for this was that 1974-75 constituted the working-up phase when organisational approaches were trialled and considerable decision-making was retained centrally. The beginning of 1976 heralded the commencement of considerable devolution of decision-making in the program and consequently the organisational structure to support it. In the development period 1974-75 a national Innovations Panel with a membership similar to that proposed above conducted its business in close accord with the terms of reference proposed for the National Innovations Committee (this committee was formally established by the Minister in 1976 thereby replacing the panel).(14) Counselling panels were established in each state and territory by March, 1974 and they initially subsumed the roles of both the proposed state and territory Innovations committees and the state and territory counselling groups.

The state and territory counselling panels were each headed by a convenor. In all cases the first convenors were people chosen from tertiary institutions. They were people recognised as having a theoretical and practical appreciation of educational innovation, a record of interest in working with people in the field, and a capacity for management. Importantly, they could be seen as independent of any education authority or interest group and were of a character that was non-powerful and non-threatening. The convenors carried the burden of instigating the local processes associated with the program especially the stimulation, development and appraisal of applications and the induction of fellow counsellors. At the national level, their membership of the National Innovations Committee required contributions to program development and the assessment and selection of projects for funding.

In accordance with the wish of the Commission the initial size of the state counselling panels was kept small: New South Wales 20; Victoria 15; Queensland 12; and the other states ten counsellors each. All appointments in these early days were made

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14. The Committee became a formal, ministerially appointed committee in 1976. Until then it was a Commission appointed panel known as the National Innovations Panel. The term 'National Innovations Committee' will be used throughout this document.

after informal consultations with a wide-range of people and the relevant organisations and authorities. The size of the counselling panels emerged as a matter of concern as the magnitude of the task presented by the flood of applications became apparent.(15) By October, 1974 the counselling panels had to be significantly expanded not just to accommodate the numbers of applications but also to take account of the geographical size and degree of decentralisation of some states (for example, Queensland and New South Wales) and the isolation of some applicants who it was felt were equally important to contact in person. Counsellors strategically placed in provincial centres, as well as capital cities, also helped contain travel costs. Moreover, a larger number of counsellors was required to give convenors greater flexibility in assigning them to particular types of projects.

Counsellors

Apart from applicants and grantees(16) (project directors) the program's counsellors were the most important human element in the program. In forming the state and territory counselling groups the Schools Commission invited a significant number of men and women in most cases already fully involved in the field of innovation to participate actively in the development of the program.(17) The members of the counselling groups were to have, individually and collectively, two basic roles. First, they were asked to use their skill and energies to stimulate and encourage innovators and potential innovators. Second, they were asked to help in the appraisal(18) of applications for grants from the Innovations Program Fund. Both these roles were seen as serving the broad objective of the program - to foster worthwhile change in Australian education.

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15. By mid-March, 1974 over 1,200 applications had been received and the flow continued during 1974.

16. A 'grantee' is the recipient of an Innovations grant. A 'project director' is the person who actually implements the project. Usually they are one and the same person. Sometimes however, a school principal will be the grantee and a teacher the project director.

17. Schools Commission. Guidelines and Notes for State Consulting Groups. Canberra, March, 1974.

18. Explained in detail on p. 77 ff, Part III.

The first role involved the encouragement of those engaged or likely to engage in change initiatives, guidance for those attempting to plan innovative projects and practical help to those actually working on such projects. The second involved helping the Commission and its National Innovations Committee to make appropriate decisions about the allocation of funds which the Central Government was to make available to foster change in primary and secondary education. It was intended that counsellors would be primarily helpers and advisors. In these roles counsellors would not themselves make decisions on applications for funds. If the two roles, as helper and decider, were mixed then the basic role of the counsellor would be compromised in the eyes of the applicant or innovator.(19) The Commission's view was that the objectives of the program could not be achieved simply by dispensing finance to selected projects. The aim was to provide support of all kinds to those forces in schools - active or potential - likely to contribute to worthwhile change. In this process a sympathetic and understanding approach was held to be the first requirement.

Subsequent experience showed that in some cases applicants were quite clear about what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it.In these cases sympathetic appraisal of the application rather than advice was required. But it was assumed that in a program concerned with initiatives for change at the 'grass roots' level at least a proportion of applicants would not have the skills needed to plan their projects fully and (or) to describe them clearly in writing. In these cases applicants appreciated the opportunity to discuss their projects

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19. As the program's operations were progressively decentralised counsellors were also asked to adopt an assessor role but not in relation to the projects (applications) that they had been associated with as counsellors.

with an interested and friendly person; some welcomed assistance in developing their ideas or in completing their applications. As the program developed the helping role extended to the building of informal networks between people with mutual interests, providing a range of support services to project directors, and assisting project directors in formative evaluations of their projects.

It was recognised that the counsellor's twin roles of appraiser and helper could conflict. How far could a counsellor give encouragement to a proposal of which he or she disapproved? Conversely, counsellors inevitably found themselves 'identifying' with projects which they had helped develop. The temptation to 'take over' such a project had to be resisted because at all times the proponent had to be in control of the project. No simple principle could be advanced to cope with these conflicts of values and there was no satisfactory resolution of the dilemma of a counsellor who felt positively towards a project he or she appraised but which did not receive a grant. In such a case the important factor was the quality of the interaction between the applicant and the counsellor: it was this interaction which determined whether the program's effect on the applicant and the school had been positive or not.

After 1974 the state and territory counselling groups greatly expanded in membership. In the larger states of New South Wales and Victoria the membership of each group came to exceed seventy people. This expansion corresponded with the annual increase in applications to the program,(20) the additional roles adopted by counsellors (for example, the stimulation and development of proposals, the support of project directors, assistance with project evaluation, and communication and dissemination work), the need to locate counsellors over wide geographical areas as well as in major cities, and the devolution of the assessment-of-applications function from the national committee to state and territory groups.

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20. In 1974-75 - 2,500 applications; 1976 - 1,350 applications; 1977 - 1,445 applications; 1978 - 1,584 applications; 1979 - 2,089 applications; 1980 - 974 applications; and 1981 - 1,238 applications.

Each year the Commission invited applications for counsellor positions in the local press in each state and territory. This constant injection of 'new blood' into the program helped maintain its vitality and introduced new viewpoints and perceptions about modes of operation and desirable directions.

A variable proportion (not exceeding thirty per cent) of counsellors retired each year. Most counsellors spent between one and three years with the program but a significant proportion remained longer. A feature of the program was the extraordinary degree of commitment, loyalty and effort over and above that requested which counsellors gave freely. In this regard counsellors were part-time workers and most were engaged as full-time educators in their own institutions. The Commission received great cooperation from their employers in releasing many of them to carry out counselling work in normal work time and all counsellors gave generously of their out-of-work time.

Change in schools involved changes in behaviour - changes in attitudes, in relationships, in the confidence which teachers, administrators, parents and others have in their ability to do what they have not done before. The role of the counsellor was seen as being vital in fostering changes of this kind.

Later Organisation and Developments (1976-81)

Committees and Counselling Groups

With the development and consolidation of the program during 1974-75 attention was increasingly turned to decentralising many of the program's processes and considering what powers could be devolved to state Innovations committees and counselling groups.

This concern with decentralisation of administration and devolution of professional decision-making powers flowed directly from the approach adopted by the Interim Committee (21) in relation to the distribution of power and decision-making as it applied to schools. The Interim Committee favoured "...less rather than more centralised control over the operation of schools" and asserted that "...a national bureaucracy, being further removed from the schools than are state ones, should not presume to interfere with the details of their operations." These views while being attributed to the management of schooling were also intended to apply on a wider scale and were adopted for the Innovations Program.

In the Commission's view any increased professional role for teachers should be accompanied by greater collaboration by the profession with the wider community and especially parents. The quality of education and the effectiveness with which the service is delivered are dependent, in a time of disagreement over values and priorities, upon the clarity of the goals set within each school. Furthermore, school improvement would appear to involve not just the quality of the decisions taken but the processes through which the decisions are reached. "Quality" and "effectiveness" are conditions most likely to be achieved through the collaboration of all interested parties: central authorities, school administrators, teachers, parents and community, and pupils. Devolution as a process, therefore, includes participation, the assumption of responsibilities, sharing, and mutual support. A major assumption which underlined the program relating to devolution is that the experience of individuals and groups in changing their own educational practice constitutes a resource which can contribute to a more general capacity for worthwhile change in Australian primary and secondary education.

The rationale and mode of operation of the program was developed out of the ideas of many people drawn from educational authorities, tertiary institutions, parent and teacher organisations, and the community. The Commission,

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21. Karmel Report, Op.cit., Paras 2.4-2.6.

itself embodying these elements, had the final authority for determining the approach to be adopted for the program at any point. The approach agreed upon, however, resulted from the inputs of people generated out of the program's committee structure, from its counselling groups and from its secretariat. Central direction was achieved through the Commission's synthesis of viewpoints from these sources.

In practical terms the process of decentralising aspects of the program posed questions of definition. Decentralisation in the Australian context can mean devolution of power and management from the national level to the state level. In fact, in terms of Australian education, centralisation tends to occur at the state level around the education authority responsible for schooling and resides in the capital city. Any movement to devolve power or decentralise administration from the national level in the Australian federal political system is likely to involve re-centralisation at the state level, in a capital city. The process of decentralisation of educational administration and professional decision-making, for example in curriculum development and school organisation, was well underway in most states in the 1970's with the establishment of regional directorates of the education authorities. However, if genuine decentralisation and devolution of authority is seen to involve a movement in the locus of decision making power to the grassroots then the processes currently underway may involve only partial devolution and forms of recentralisation, albeit at 'lower' levels. This process of decentralisation - recentralisation has the potential to be even more oppressive and restrictive of professional initiative than the more traditional head office/capital city control of earlier times.

This problem of achieving genuine devolution of power was confronted in the Innovations Program. In 1976 a National Innovations Committee was officially appointed by the Minister for Education. It comprised as its core membership people responsible for conducting the professional aspects of the program in the states and territories. At the same time state and territory Innovations committees were appointed and included people with commitment and professional capacity in relation to educational innovation. More importantly these people were drawn mainly from schools and communities. In this sense a condition for some genuine devolution was met, however, the committees were state committees and more particularly, 'capital city' committees in terms of the location of the majority of their membership. A further step was necessary which involved the progressive regionalisation of decision-making and program management away from the overwhelming dominance of the capital cities. The movement to regionalisation and the devolution of power is discussed below (see p. 70 f, Part III and p.167 f, Part IV).

Between 1976 and 1981 the National Innovations Committee varied between thirteen and sixteen members. The chairperson was usually a full-time Commissioner or an 'independent' person with experience at participating in the program at the state level. The core membership included the eight state and territory convenors of committees. In addition, another Commissioner and between two and four other members usually with associations with parent and teacher organisations, the government, Catholic and the non-Catholic/non-government school sectors, and tertiary institutions made up the committee's membership.

The National Innovations Committee was, apart from the Commission's own secretariat, the main advisory body for the program. Apart from policy development the Committee was always responsible for applying a national overview to local assessments of projects and recommendations to the Schools Commission. In 1974 the forerunner of the formalised National Innovations Committee conducted all assessments and took responsibility for all recommendations concerning projects. After 1974 these functions were progressively moved to the state level. For instance, in 1979 state and territory Innovations committees assessed all 2,089 applications received while the National Innovations Committee made final assessments of the best 60 or so projects involving grants in excess of $20,000. Sample assessments of projects requiring grants of less than $20,000 were also conducted by the National Committee as part of the 'moderation' exercise to determine that a roughly equivalent notion of quality for selected projects existed across states. Ultimately the recommendations to the Commission for this series of grants comprised approximately 300 recommendations flowing direct from state and territory committees but 'moderated' by the National Committee and twenty recommendations for grants over $20,000 from the National Committee. In other words, all 2,089 applications were assessed at the state level and of the projects eventually supported with grants ninety per cent resulted from recommendations of state and territory committees. Of the total of 315 recommendations to the Commission none was rejected, although one proposed grant was modified by the Commission.

The state and territory Innovations committees also became ministerially appointed groups in 1976. They had memberships varying between eight and ten people drawn from a wide spectrum of interest groups but the primary criterion for appointment was the commitment to educational innovation. It was usual for most committee members to be selected from state and territory counselling groups; that is, that prospective committee members had experience in the intricacies of the program as counsellors before they became members of committees. A policy, later abandoned due to the need to reduce the membership of committees, involved two 'rotating' positions on the local committees. These positions were filled by people drawn from each counselling group for periods of around four months during the twelve month term of office of the committees. By this formal method and also by throwing state and territory committee meetings open to members of counselling groups the operation of the program was made as 'open' and as 'participative' as possible. Counsellors, however, did not have a deliberative vote where committee proceedings required it.

Both the national level and the state and territory level committees had similar terms of reference. Both groups of committees assessed projects, contributed to policy development, monitored trends in grants, project types and the general directions of funding. The state level committees were expected to relate the program to the particular characteristics of each state's education system just as the national committee was to concern itself with national thrusts and overview. Moreover, state and territory committees in concert with their convenors were responsible for program management and the organisation of the counselling groups.

Strategy development was a major task of all the program's elements. Apart from the consideration of applications for grants, the strategies were included in various sub-program activities. These were listed as stimulation work,(22) development of applications, dissemination and communication of information and ideas, support of project directors (and help to applicants failing to receive grants), and project evaluation. Overall committees and counsellors were asked to constantly consider ways in which the program could improve the climate for educational innovation, supply support and encouragement to innovators, and increase the general momentum of innovative effort. Between 1976 and 1978 sub-committees of the national and state committees were appointed with special charters to develop strategies in all the nominated areas. These sub-committees were disbanded(23) in 1978 largely because of administrative complexity and financial cost and the tasks were returned to the full committees.

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22. This was an activity conducted mainly by counsellors to stimulate applications from various sectors and geographical areas. As funds available to the program were progressively reduced this activity was cut back. It is discussed in more detail on p.101ff along with other sub-program activities.

23. Both costs of administration and the complexity of the administration were kept under close scrutiny. Administrative funds for committee sittings amounted to around $60,000 per year and for counsellors fees to $70,000 per year (rough averages for the years 1974-80).

Coincidentally with the disbandment of the sub-committees the number of formal meetings of all committees was reduced - at the national level from about five to three per year and in the states and territories from about ten to three or four per year. To accommodate the reduced amount of committee consultation a management group (three members, including the convenor) was formed in each state and territory to handle program operations between meetings of the committee (some committees, of their own volition decided to continue to meet more frequently than the three or four times proposed by the Commission but were not paid expenses). These management groups, always responsible to their committees, dealt with the approvals or recommendations in respect of major variations to grants (for example, requests for supplementation of grants) and variations to projects (for example, changes of grantee, changes of project location, and changes of a major nature in project rationale). In some cases a counsellor or Commission liaison officer would be required to visit the project on-site to gather information before the management group, or the relevant committee, would approve the variation. The convenors of the committees were also responsible for the training and briefing of counsellors in all aspects of their work.

Regionalisation

A strongly held view of people associated with the program was that it should be accessible to the broadest number of people and that there should be a minimum of real or imagined constraints in using it. Another conviction was that the program should, in practice, embody the values and perspectives of the Schools Commission within its own operations. Its overall approach should be innovative. Central to these intentions were the organisational and administrative patterns devised for the program. The program, being about the development and support of ideas and people, required that its organisational structure be set as close to people working in and around schools as possible. The counsellors, the program's 'human face', had a powerful effect on bringing the program close to its clientele. The extent to which this face-to-face approach was achieved from 1974 could be seen in the relative importance of the counsellor and the state or territory committee as opposed to the program's national administrative apparatus which receded in importance for the applicant and the project director.

Regionalisation was therefore a further and perhaps the most radical attempt to decentralise the program's organisation and devolve decision-making power. Three attempts were developed in 1979 and 1980 to regionalise the program's operations - in the states of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Here the counsellors were made focal points and the organisational approach involved establishing small groups of counsellors in regional centres throughout the three states. The counsellors in their groups had responsibility for assessing the educational outlook in the regions and the promotion of the program in all its aspects in a manner similar to that conducted by state committees. In Victoria, the process of regionalisation was further extended in the operation of the Small Grants arm of the program by the allocation amongst the regional groups of that state's funds for the scheme. These groups were given responsibility for the assessment of applications, the selection of projects for funding commensurate with the funds allocated, and the recommendation of grants to the state Innovations committee and then subsequently to the Schools Commission. It was intended that the movement to regionalisation of the program's organisation would continue and that various approaches would be experimented with to strengthen the 'grass roots' character of the program. This process was halted with the announcement of the termination of the program in 1981.

The Small Grants Scheme

In 1979, on the advice of the National Innovations Committee, the Schools Commission instituted a separate small grants element. Although very small grants were part of the program this Commission initiative established a self-contained sub-program involving grants up to $1,000 each and a national allocation of up to fifteen per cent of the program's resources per year (that is, $200,000 in 1979 and $300,000 in 1980).

The introduction of a small grants scheme was aimed at providing an on-going response to people with emerging ideas for, initially, small-scale projects some of which upon trialling might become more substantial activities within the school community. From a visibility viewpoint it enabled the program to receive proposals throughout the year and respond to them quickly with financial help. (Since 1977 the program had been restricted to calling one round of applications annually which was assessed over three months late in the year preceding the proposed implementation of the projects). For small-scale projects at least, applicants no longer had to wait for the once in a year period when applications were invited. Apart from providing a means whereby the program could support a larger number of people, the scheme also provided a means of assistance to teachers, parents and others who may have been intimidated by both a belief that only very sophisticated proposals would be viewed favourably and apprehension about the existing assessment process for large projects.

The assessment and selection of projects for support was simple and relatively quick (three to four weeks). In several states where the program's organisation was regionalised groups of counsellors received, assessed and selected projects for funding and the whole activity was oversighted by the state Innovations committee. Elsewhere sub-groups of the state committees met regularly to process applications. Because of lack of funds most state committees were unable to use their counsellors in the small grants scheme as they could in the main program area. In 1979, for example, 276 projects were supported with grants from a total of 1,146 applications and in 1980 some 375 were funded out of 1,017 applications.

The Innovations Program and the Education Authorities

While tensions in relations between state and central government authorities did occur in relation to the Innovations Program they were never sufficiently great to threaten its operation. As time passed the program became accepted and accommodated by state authorities. Mechanisms were established to facilitate the management of the program in the states and to promote the flow of information between the program and the education authorities. For instance, each state and territory Innovations committee included a position set aside for a state Education Department officer and a person from the state Catholic Education Commission. These people not only acted as committee members on the basis of their own capacities and interest in educational innovation but also fulfilled a 'liaison officer' role communicating to the education authority matters pertaining to the program which affected it and feeding into the program's committee structure the viewpoints of the education authority. In addition, the liaison officers had access to applications for grants and could comment upon these as they were appraised and assessed. Decisions on projects approved for funding were supplied to Education Departments before the proposed grants were made public. A similar mechanism of consultation existed in relation to the selection and appointment of counsellors. This was necessary because the process of on-site appraisal of applications by counsellors required that they had access to schools controlled by the various authorities. Aside from these formal mechanisms a number of senior officers of the education authorities voluntarily involved themselves in the program because of their professional interest in its aims and strategies.

The assistance and support of education authorities between 1974 and 1979 was welcome and important but in terms of the program's strategy it could have been extended. Consultations commenced in 1979-80 to consider ways and means of making school organisational and administrative arrangements and resources more available to and supportive of innovators and change-agents. It was felt insufficient for a school to passively accept an Innovations project; there were many ways in which the school and its personnel not directly involved in the project could provide support and assistance. Although representatives of education authorities were sympathetic to this view it made little practical headway by 1981 even though support for it grew strongly within state Innovations committees in 1980 and 1981.

An Innovations Project: From Conception to Completion

Early Stages

A person with an idea was 'picked-up' by the program through newspaper advertisements in the national and local press(24) and also, as the program became better known, by word of mouth. Counsellors as program advocates, stimulators or change-agents also played a role in linking people with ideas (proposals) to the program.

Once an embryonic proposal was developed several things could occur. The proponent had first to obtain the permission of the school principal to implement the project. Second, the Commission might be approached and requested to provide a counsellor to assist with the further development of the idea. The extent of the counsellor's involvement would be officially rarely more than half a day but in many cases it would be of considerably longer duration. The counsellor could simply

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24. In 1974 a series of newspaper advertisements was placed during the year and applications were received on a rolling basis. Since 1977 only one series of grants (not including the small grants now being awarded) were made per year and advertisements were placed once, usually in mid-year, inviting applications for funds which become available in January of the succeeding year. This timetable enabled projects to be commenced at the beginning of a school year. While this timetable meshed better with the timetable of the school year it did prevent the program making an immediate response to an applicant with a good idea. An idea being developed in March of a given year had to wait until January of the following year before an offer of grant could be made and funds advanced.

offer general advice about the rationale, method of implementation, costing or budget items in relation to the proposal. Alternatively, the counsellor could become more deeply involved in the development of the idea and its planning as a project. This developmental work of the counsellor occurred in a minority of cases and at the request of the proponent who remained in control of the proposal and its development at all times. Its importance as a process was that it provided initial moral support and additional professional underpinning for people who perhaps through lack of experience needed help to bring an idea to life. Also, it tended to improve the quality of the proposal ultimately submitted to the Commission for consideration. In most cases applicants developed their own proposals utilising whatever assistance they could obtain.

The Application

All potential applicants had first to obtain an application form and the document(25) outlining the features of the program and what was required in an application. The newspaper advertisements and the guidelines invited applications from schools as a whole, teachers, parents, students, and community-based people. The basic criteria for funding was set out and included:

- the values and priorities of the Schools Commission;
- whether the project could be regarded as innovative in its own setting;
- the likely results and benefits of the project such as, the degree to which the project was likely to benefit the group immediately concerned; whether it was likely to encourage and stimulate initiatives at the school level; whether it was likely to be a 'significant innovation' that is, to have value for other schools or systems or to have an impact on the education system generally;
- the size of the grant sought in relation to the likely benefits;

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25. Schools Commission. Special Projects (Innovations) Program: Guidelines for Applicants. (Various years)

- the number of grants made to projects of a similar kind, especially projects within the same school system;
- the apparent capacity and degree of commitment of the sponsors;
- the origin of the project - whether it was conceived by those who produced the application and intend to implement it;
- the degree of preparation and effort put into the project at the time of application.

It was expected that projects would be pitched at the school and community levels, would include action at the 'work-face', and would involve the actual implementation of new processes. The criteria expressly excluded most research projects for which alternative sources of funding existed. The program was mainly concerned with primary and secondary education and the need to expand conventional notions of what this entailed. This approach was therefore not based upon a restrictive definition of the school which would, for example, exclude students of certain ages or restrict activities to particular times of the day or year or locations. Applications which dealt exclusively with pre-school children or adults (where the latter were not involved in some particular way with primary and secondary education), however, were ineligible for support. The program also supported curriculum development at the local level but grants were not made to projects involving the centralised development and production of materials on a large scale.

In general only specific innovative projects were funded. Special factors applied to applications for the general support of schools claiming to be innovative or from groups hoping to establish such schools. Other central government and state government funds were available to assist in the capital and recurrent costs of these schools. Innovations Program funds in relation to an innovative 'alternative' school could be applied to projects constituting innovative aspects of the curriculum of such a school.

Finally, grants were not made to assist individuals to improve their qualifications, knowledge or experience independently of a field-based experiment, and grants were not made to cover costs which a school authority could be expected to meet as part of normal expenditure.

An application consisted of the following:[26]

- aims and rationale including any specific immediate and (or) long-term objectives of the project;
- a description and plan of the project - a statement in simple language outlining what it was proposed to do: the activities and learning experiences it was proposed to provide and how they would be implemented;
- the resources required and available - personnel, accommodation, equipment and materials, and specialist or support services;
- assistance already obtained or expected (including the approval of school authorities and support of colleagues or parents as the case may be);
- a costed budget.

The Appraisal of the Application

Apart from 'developmental' counselling described earlier, and 'support' counselling accorded grantees, the appraisal of applications was the main task of the counsellor. Once an application's eligibility was established by the local convenor it was assigned to a counsellor. Only in special circumstances was the particular subject knowledge of a counsellor taken into consideration in assigning applications. Counsellors were not appointed and trained on the basis of their specialist knowledge or expertise. They were regarded as educational generalists; the recognition of their expertise was limited as far as possible to their role as counsellors.

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[26] A simple statement of intention including a brief outline of a plan was accepted as a preliminary application. Development of the application could proceed from this point.

The counsellor's appraisal(27) work took place on a face-to-face basis with the applicant preferably at the location of the proposed project. It was a task which nominally consumed half a day's effort for which payment was made to the counsellor. It was a task of major importance. If a sympathetic but nevertheless critical approach was made to the applicant much needed support and confidence could be gained. Many innovators were seen to be relatively isolated professionals or well-intentioned community members who needed to identify with someone who understood their motives and from whom they could obtain encouragement and confidence. A Schools Commission counsellor far from being intimidating could give authoritative support to a tentative innovator. This was the essence of the counsellor's 'helping' role and assumed further importance if the proposal was not funded subsequently.

If the proposal was well developed the counsellor would move immediately to the appraisal process; if not, then the development of the application would be the first task. Appraisal included: ensuring that the applicant was the designer and potential implementor of the project as well as having the capacity to put it into effect; ascertaining support for the project in the school as well as its relevance and need; determining whether the plan was well thought out, whether the objectives were clearly defined and were capable of being achieved; modifying the project in ways which would improve it so long as these changes resulted from decisions made by the applicant who at any stage was free to reject advice; checking the budget for costing and the relevance and adequacy of the items to the implementation plan; ascertaining whether the costs of the project could be reasonably met from other sources; establishing a desirable period for the

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27. 'Appraisal' and 'assessment' were two distinct operations. Appraisal involved clarification and perhaps further development or modification of the proposal and culminated in a written report by the counsellor. Assessment was a separate process where a decision was made whether the project was of sufficient quality to warrant funding.

Commission's involvement in the project(28) which was a period long enough to allow for its basic development (that is, for its effects and benefits to become manifest, for an initial evaluation to be conducted and for decisions to be made about its continuance and further funding); determining whether the project would be an innovation in its context; and establishing whatever Commission values and priorities were inherent in the project although this was not an absolute prerequisite for funding.

On completion of the visit the counsellor prepared a report for the state and territory Innovations committee (in 1974-75 for the National Innovations Committee) and its assessment panel. The report could be as critical as the counsellor thought appropriate; a counsellor was not expected to applaud a proposal which he or she did not like. The counsellor, however, did not have the power to advise an applicant to withdraw a proposal or to intimate in an authoritative way whether it would be funded or not. The counsellor's report was considered by an assessment panel along with the application. The report constituted, in a way, the 'eyes and ears' of the assessors when a decision was made.

Assessment of the Application

Assessment was the process of determining whether a project *should or should not* be recommended for funding. As a process it was distinct from appraisal, however, the appraisal report was used together with the application when the assessment was made. In 1974-75 assessment was geographically and procedurally separate from appraisal because it was conducted in Canberra by the National Innovations Committee assisted by a representative sample of counsellors from the states and territories. Since

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28. The 'period of the project' was the term used to designate the period of the *Commission's* involvement in the project - usually two years. It did not necessarily accord with the period of *funding* although where *recurrent* funding was involved the period of funding and the period of the project were likely to be one and the same. The life of a project could far exceed the 'period of the project'.

1976 it was a function of state Innovations committees and their counselling groups except for applications requiring large grants, that is, those defined at various times over the period 1974-79 as projects involving grants of $3,000, $7,000, $12,000, and subsequently $20,000.(29) The final decision on all projects to receive funding was made by the Schools Commission at the national level.

One reason for this centralist tendency, particularly in the early period, arose out of the national nature of the program. It was to develop as an instrument for the encouragement of change directed towards improving the quality of education. As such it involved more than a fund of money to be dispersed to the states by some per-capita formula. It involved directing the funds to quality proposals wherever they might be, and supporting the whole process of development of ideas and implementation of projects. A national notion of quality(30) of projects had to be determined in general terms, balance in the allocation of funds to types of projects had to be monitored, and a direction or orientation for the program had to be established from a resolution of factors including the Commission's own priorities and values, and trends emerging through the responses of individual applicants to the program.

Also in 1974-75 an intervening process occurred between appraisal and assessment called the 'review'. Within the time constraints established by the need to respond quickly to applicants and the volume of applications to be considered, the review process provided another link in the chain of appraisal.

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29. A limited move was made in 1974 to devolve the assessment function to the state level due in part to the volume of work. In late 1974 applications involving grants of less than $3,000 were assessed at the state level. This involved around sixty per cent of applications.

30. This was achieved in early trial assessment exercises conducted by the National Innovations Committee and groups of state counsellors acting in concert. The National Innovations Committee continued to the end of the program to conduct 'moderation' exercises on what were then state assessments to ensure that a national notion of quality was maintained in the assessment process.

The review activity was the final aspect of appraisal. After the reports of the individual counsellors were received the convenor would assign the applications and the counsellors' reports to a review panel at the state level.(31) The panels each consisted of four or five counsellors including, if possible, the counsellors originally assigned to do the appraisals. The function of the panel was to make an 'armchair' appraisal of the application on the basis of the written material before it, supplemented by oral evidence of the counsellor who conducted the appraisal. A written review comment was prepared reflecting the various views of the members of the panel, if there were differences of opinion. The panel had a responsibility to ensure that the total appraisal at the local level was fair and balanced, that is, that all the information and comments taken together provided the National Innovations Committee with sufficient detail to make sound decisions. Armed with a fully developed application, a counsellor's report and a review panel commentary, the National Innovations Committee and its assessors were adequately provided with information upon which to base assessments.

Since 1976 when the assessment function began to be turned over in a significant way to state Innovations committees and their assessment panels, the review panel appraisal and the assessment processes were combined into one activity - an initial discussion about a project contributed to, where possible, by the relevant counsellor, then the assessment decision.

In early 1974 various options confronted the Commission in establishing a framework for the assessment of applications. The Commission could establish a set of criteria which the national committee could then apply to applications to determine whether they should be funded or not. Or, the Commission could establish a set of criteria against which the committee could rank applications which would then be funded down the rank order until the funds ran out. Both these options appeared

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31. Almost always a group of counsellors located in a state capital city.

relatively straight forward but posed problems because of the nature of the applications themselves. It quickly became apparent in trial assessments of actual applications that there were too many factors to be considered and that no workable criteria-framework could accommodate them. Subjective, but professional, judgements were required in many cases. The quality of an application or project was one major matter, but so also was the notion of innovation in context and maybe, more importantly, the potential impact of the project in context. The program was to be about fostering worthwhile change, not necessarily about funding only the best innovative projects.

The approach finally arrived at in April, 1974 and subsequently developed was for the Commission to list a number of factors which the National Innovations Committee could take into account in making its recommendations. The principle was that the existence of any of these factors in a project would increase the probability of funding, not that any one factor (or any particular combination of factors) should alone make funding certain or give the project a particular priority. Similarly, the absence of one factor or a combination of factors would not mean that a project should not be funded.

The Commission issued a list of factors under the heading, 'Some Criteria for Assessment'.(32) A sample of these factors is given below. The questions indicate many of the principal issues requiring consideration:

- What characteristics of the proposal itself and its background recommend it?
  - capacity and commitment of sponsors
  - origin: local level
  - degree of preparedness
  - is it likely to work?

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32. See, Schools Commission. Handbook for Counsellors, Canberra, 1978. Appendix J, pp. 11-12.

- Is the proposal based on any of the values stated or implied by the Commission, or any other important values?
    - improve learning of basic skills
    - increase equality of opportunity
    - advance community involvement in schools
    - increase diversity (that is, range of choice)
    - explore new structures and relationships
    - increase cross cultural or ethnic sensitivity
- What is the estimated value of the project and what are the likely results and benefits?
    - what is the value as seen by the groups immediately concerned, what support for it exists?
    - does there appear to be a need for the project in its context?
    - what immediate benefit might accrue to the group or individuals involved?
    - can the project be reckoned innovative in the setting?
    - is it likely to lead to further developments in its own setting?

A rating code(33) for assessment of projects was established to be used following the application of the criteria and any other factors deemed necessary. The code was as follows:

A - Project should be funded; highly recommended

B - Could be funded; second priority

C - Uncertain; to be used only as an interim rating by an assessor

E - Should not be funded

INF - Further particular information required before decision

N - Needs further development; refer back to applicant, possibly through the counsellor

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33. Ibid, Appendix J, p. 15. The rating code was subject to minor variations between 1974 and 1979. The one set out here is representative.

P - Policy question to be decided by the full committee (e.g. eligibility; educational acceptability)

R - The inability of assessors, for whatever reason, to reach a decision.

Using this approach the National Committee assessed and sorted the applications current at that moment into the 'A', 'B', 'E', 'Inf'/'N' and 'P'/'R' categories. If it appeared that the total value of 'A' and 'B' projects could be funded then these two categories could be joined and recommended to the Commission. In 1974 the level of funding available to the Commission for Innovations projects - $6 million for 1974-75 - did not induce a process which later occurred, that is, the need to select between 'A'-rated projects because of the inadequacy of the funds available and the numbers of quality applications received. As a result many projects with 'B'-ratings were funded in 1974 though they were usually small in grant terms - around $2,000.

Whether the assessment was conducted by the national or state committees the actual assessment process(34) occurred roughly as follows. Assessments were made without reference to the funds likely to be available to a state or territory. That is, assessment had to be made firstly on the basis of the inherent merits of the project itself, its compatibility with its environment and secondly, the way it related to the criteria for assessment established by the Schools Commission. It was assumed that applications requesting large grants would involve more complex proposals and hence would require greater scrutiny and examination, although clearly this assumption was not always correct. For much smaller grants less time was spent on assessment, fewer assessors were involved, and greater consideration was given to positive factors, that is, the less cautious assessors

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34. The process was conducted within guidelines laid down by the Commission, however, state committees were free to experiment with and vary the approach providing the guidelines were not abrogated. See Handbook for Counsellors, Appendix J, pp. 8-16.

needed to be. For projects whose grant applications exceeded $3,000 two assessors were normally employed. The initial assessment was conducted independently by each member of the assessing pair. When ratings were compared consensus on the rating concluded the assessment. If there was disagreement, and this remained after discussion between the assessors, a referee (a senior assessor, usually) was called in to resolve the disagreement, if necessary by making the final decision. A similar process occurred until 1980 for projects involving grants over $20,000, whereby groups of three assessors were used and the final rating made was that of the National Committee's assessors who had the benefit of the interim rating of the assessors of the state or territory committee. It was the task of the convenors of the committees to ensure that appropriate 'moderation' procedures were established in the assessment of projects.

Selection of Projects, and Priorities

The process of selection followed the development, appraisal and assessment of applications. It was a process carried out from 1976 by state and territory committees and the National Innovations Committee and became necessary as the funds available to support projects fell below the level necessary to fund all 'A'-rated projects.(35)

Applications for grants below $20,000 were assessed under the auspices of state and territory Innovations committees which selected the projects to be recommended to the Schools Commission.(36) The National Innovations Committee conducted a

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35. It was pointed out earlier that in 1974 not only A-rated projects but some B-rated projects could also be supported with grants. The reduction in funds after 1974-75 and the continual increase in applications in the period to 1980 meant that selection between A-rated projects had to be made by state and national committees.

36. Applications for grants below $20,000 constituted about ninety per cent of applications considered. It was decided that for 1981 projects (assessed in late 1980) all final assessments would be conducted by state and territory Innovations committees. The National Innovations Committee would have a general monitoring role in relation to the quality and nature of projects selected by the local committees to receive grants.

'moderation' exercise on samples of the assessments made at the state level to ensure that there was a comparable notion of quality of projects nationally. If it was determined by the National Committee that the assessment and selection of projects in a state fell below this notion of quality the recommendations of the state committee went forward to the Commission unchanged by the National Committee but both the Commission and the state committee were advised of the situation. At worst a state committee could be requested by the Commission to reassess all its projects, or provide justification for its assessment and selection, or else take account of the findings when it next assessed other projects.

Applications for grants above $20,000 were given an initial assessment by the state and territory Innovations committees and were again assessed by the National Innovations Committee which made the final assessment, selection and recommendation of these projects for funding. In selecting the projects the National Committee was concerned foremost with the quality and viability of the proposals; however it was also concerned to attach some national overview to the process. For instance, the committee would look at proposals in terms of the insights and directions they offered for educational innovation in Australia. Projects having the potential to open up consideration of new issues or tackle established areas requiring new approaches were given close attention.

Funds for new projects in a particular year were allocated between state and territory Innovations committees by a formula based upon the quality of projects. Funds allocated to a state committee were based upon the proportion of applications rated 'A' in the state relative to the national total of A-rated applications.(37) Each local committee

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37. Suppose $1 million was available nationally and that 100 applications were A-rated nationally. The state with 25 A-rated applications would therefore receive $250,000 to apply to its 25 A-rated projects. The state committee would then select the A-rated projects to receive funding and recommend these to the Commission. It was unlikely, however, that the funds would enable all 25 projects to be funded.

ranked its A-rated(38) projects (those over and under $20,000 being mixed together) and the funds allocated were applied to the ranked list of projects until the assigned funds were exhausted. The initial ranked list could be disturbed slightly when other considerations in this selection process were applied such as questions of 'balance' and 'spread', to be discussed below. Each project application involving a grant in excess of $20,000 and located on the ranked list was separately assessed by the National Innovations Committee which had power to add or remove such projects to or from the lists. On completion of the selection process by state and territory Innovations committees and moderation and final selection of projects involving grants over $20,000 by the National Innovations Committee, the projects recommended for funding were passed to the Schools Commission for approval and then to the Commonwealth Minister for Education for the authorisation to pay the grants through the relevant state.

Several additional aspects of the selection process should be explained. Before arriving at its final set of recommendations to the Commission the relevant committee had to check along a number of dimensions to try to ensure that a reasonable balance existed. The dimensions of balance included grants between states, between primary and secondary education, between rural and urban areas, between government and non-government school sectors, between categories of project types in curriculum areas, and between large and small grants. That a fair balance along all these dimensions was achieved without resorting to hard and fast mathematical formulae or distortions of the assessment process can be gauged from the statistical tables in the Appendix.(39)

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38. In 1977 and 1978 funds were divided between large and small projects in the proportion of approximately 4:5 and these projects were assessed and selected by the National Innovations Committee and the state Innovations committees respectively. This formula, in a tight funding situation, gave a reasonable opportunity for the small states and the territories to receive funding of some large projects.

39. See especially Tables II, III, VI, VII, XIII and XIV.

Being a 'response' program the Commission tended to support areas of education that were clearly fashionable at the local level or of considerable interest to school people at a particular time. For instance, remediation for literacy and numeracy, audio-visual activities, playground development, school camps and environmental education all occupied much attention at varying times. The Committee and the Commission had to closely monitor the intensification of funding in such areas and to determine at times how far and for how long funds should be allowed to be focused on any one area to the relative exclusion of others. Moreover, the Commission maintained its resolve to fund quality projects and did not commit itself to the support of inadequate proposals from areas where little response was in evidence. If this situation emerged in, say, a government or non-government sector in a state the solution would not be to fund the one poor quality project available but to actively communicate the existence of the program to that area and by the use of counsellors to assist in lifting the number and quality of applications received.

The matter of 'spread' was regarded as an aspect of balance along the various dimensions outlined. An aim of the program was to encourage initiative - to stimulate and support many people to involve themselves in the problems of education and to take some responsibility for devising solutions to those problems. If willing, in-built, problem-solving capacities were to be developed among people associated with primary and secondary education then clearly many people had to become aware of the problems, be confident and desirous of tackling them, and supported in their efforts. To this extent the Innovations Program, in conjunction with other efforts directed at similar ends, had to be a 'hands-on' program which touched as many people as possible.

This objective impinged upon the criterion of 'quality' in selecting projects to receive grants. If twenty grants were to be awarded in a state should three go to the one school because that was where the three best projects were judged to be, or, should two of these grants be awarded to quality projects elsewhere to influence more people and to stimulate activity more widely? This was one of many dilemmas that confronted the program in action. Until 1979, with the exception of the earliest period, the Commission's policy was that only in special circumstances would two grants be made to a school in a particular year. This policy was abandoned in 1979 and state committees thereafter considered the matter of distribution of grants in a discretionary way. The problem of achieving spread and impact for the program's diminishing resources continued and was thrown into even higher relief as budgetary restraint continued in 1980 and 1981. The small grant scheme outlined earlier (see pp.71-72) was, in part, a response to this funding problem.

The selection process also raised the matter of high-risk projects. Clearly these projects required much greater attention in assessment than projects which were simply innovative in their contexts and which needed a small amount of funding. The latter were improvement oriented, the former were often highly innovative in and beyond their contexts. High-risk projects were particularly vulnerable because they tended to test out the willingness of associated education authorities to 'bear' them. They were projects that required sympathetic appreciation and this was more difficult conceptually for interested outsiders than for the project directors. These were the projects that required special support from counsellors and the Commission.

In considering the processes of assessment and selection of projects, matters of 'priority' and 'direction' for the program remained contentious until the end. After the early rounds of grants had been made the Commission expressed some concern that perhaps the program lacked sufficient discernible direction in its thrusts and that maybe the values enunciated by it and the Interim Committee were not sufficiently well reflected in the projects being selected for support. It is important to stress that this attitude reflected a concern rather than a conclusion because the program's whole approach was still in the initial development stage and only a hundred or so grants had been awarded. This matter was drawn to the attention of the

National Innovations Committee. Subsequently, the Commission's Report for the Triennium 1976-78(40) carried a section on 'Directions and Priorities' and included a wide-ranging set of thirteen Commission priority areas to be considered within the Innovations Program's processes. In setting these priorities for consideration within the program from 1976 onward the Commission stated:

> "While the Program has been primarily concerned to respond to initiatives, the process of appraising applications has taken careful account of the values and principles of the Commission. In the first place projects seen to run counter to any such value or principle have not been supported; in the second place any project seen to meet any of a number of specified criteria based on these values has had increased likelihood of being supported."
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> "The Commission believes that this concern with values in the selection of projects should continue and in addition the Program should take account of particular national needs which require action in certain priority areas. Firstly, when applications for grants are invited special attention may be called to particular areas. Secondly, these areas can be given some degree of priority in the selection of projects, though not to the extent of lowering the general standards set for selection, or of distorting the nature of the Program by inducing applicants to modify their projects simply in the hope of improving the likelihood of their applications being successful. Thirdly, during the process of diffusion some projects can be given emphasis."

In tentatively accommodating this issue of the Program's approach to 'priorities', 'values' and 'directions' and in acknowledging the Commission's decision, the strategy developed by the National Innovations Committee was important. In a report and review of program development(41) the Committee pointed out that it had been at pains to decide how much control it could legitimately exercise over the direction of the program without doing violence to its essential nature as an instrument of response which allowed teachers, students, parents and community - the people 'at the work-face' - to define innovation

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40. See Chapter 17, pp. 186-197.

41. National Innovations Committee, Report to the Schools Commission, Canberra, 1975. (Unpublished).

themselves according to the needs and opportunities of their own local situation.

The Committee recognised that some innovations clearly have greater educational value than others and that the task of selection is therefore an inescapable responsibility. The responsibility had to be used creatively to give the program discernible directions and to direct resources to areas of priority, for example, projects which would foster greater community involvement in schools. It was the Committee's view that the main 'thrusts' of the program would progressively emerge as the power of 'selective sponsorship' was exercised at two points in its operation: firstly, during the assessment process and, secondly, and potentially more importantly, the shaping influence exerted as innovations 'networks' selectively generated new projects and applications by focusing professional and public attention on priority areas for innovation. This said, the Committee expressed the view that the value emphases shaping the program's directions should not be reified or in any way fixed into inflexible hierarchies of priority. The program's value configuration should be kept in a constant state of adaptation and redefinition in the light of the program's ongoing interaction with innovators, schools, and the education system.

The Committee went on to point out that most projects tended to be resistant to summarised description and classification and were indeterminate in the sense that their values were operationally interdependent. An example might be a project which involved the employment of a school liaison officer to effect closer working relations between the school, its under-achieving migrant students and their parents. Such a project might relate simultaneously to several values including equality of opportunity, community involvement, exploring new structures and relationships, cross cultural sensitivity, and perhaps also, the learning of basic skills and the devolution of responsibility. The participants, teachers, students, parents, administrators and others were all likely to give a different order to the values and all would probably want to change the order with every movement of time and context.

Thus the Committee took the view that these problems of description, definition, classification and assessment were inherent in any faithful application of a working philosophy which gave due emphasis to the psychological, social and situational conditions of effective change. It was therefore difficult to infer the values of an innovation from its physical facts and structural arrangements. The Committee did not wish to argue that the formal, physical, and structural aspects of innovations proposals were entirely unimportant as referrents and indices of a project's educational values. Instead it stressed only that these were the aspects which were most amenable to description in the list of projects submitted to the Commission from time to time and that their significance as indices of value varied greatly in accordance with the varying nature of projects. Most projects were, to a lesser or greater extent, anchored in the realm of social relationships (between teachers, learners, parents and others). Moreover, educational values were, in this realm, embodied and expressed in these working relationships, and they were, for this reason, available to an assessor only as subjective understandings which could be gained through his/her own involvement (however limited) in the actual situation. A second and equally important corollary was that these working relationships embodied a constellation of several inextricably interwoven values which were given constantly changing emphases in the course of their application in the moving context of a project.

The Committee summed up its position by underlining that these considerations and implications followed its reading of the report of the Interim Committee. They determined the Committee's methods of operation and the way in which it sought to apply the value criteria to its appraisals and assessments. The Committee felt that the thirteen priorities of the Commission, being so all-embracing, could not be used to establish operational priorities for the selection of projects for funding. Moreover, personal experience and statistical evidence demonstrated that the values expressed in the report of the Interim Committee had been furthered in the administration of the program and in its funding decisions.

In responding to the Commission the Committee did propose a variation in the approach to the stimulation, development and assessment of projects. The Committee recognised in the list of thirteen priorities a distinction between 'populations' (isolated, handicapped, aboriginal, 'migrants', girls and women, and the talented) and 'processes' (e.g. the learning of basic skills, exploring ways to open up basic structures, etc.). It suggested that greater help in the *stimulation* and *development* of applications should be given to proposals affecting the nominated populations and furthering the processes. Moreover, the counsellor could identify on his/her check-list at the *appraisal* stage which of the thirteen priorities appeared to be evident in the project and this information could be used to keep track of the directions of funding. Beyond this appraisal task the *assessment* and *selection* of projects could occur in two stages according to the quality of the idea, soundness of the planning, competence of the proponents, and with reference to the priorities expressed by the Commission. In the first stage assessment would involve the application of a rating to a project according to those factors aforementioned. The process of selection of projects for funding would take particular account of the nominated priorities. Finally, the Commission decided to place the responsibility on state and territory Innovations committees to apply the priorities at their discretion.

In more recent years the matter of priorities and their use in the selection process was again raised. The reduced funding available to the program coupled with the continuing increase in applications received led to the creation of a 'funding gap' illustrated by the fact that in 1979 15 per cent of applications received funding support and these successful applications comprised about one-third of those assessed as supportable propositions.(42) The gap gave evidence of the program's reduced ability to match its fundamental strategy which was a widespread, 'hands-on' approach to many people associated with education.

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42. This situation was exacerbated by inflation in the Australian economy and perhaps a growing confidence amongst applicants resulting in claims for larger grants.

One antidote to this situation was avoided, namely, that a ceiling be put on grants to be offered. The Commission mindful of the 'gap' also gave consideration to a range of possible options in respect of the use of priorities. These included the establishment of a narrow band of priority areas which might result in grants going to only one sector of education in a particular year, for example, the primary sector. Some other selected areas could have been rural education, the education of fifteen and sixteen year olds, and so on. This would have significantly altered the program's whole approach but would have given it the penetrating direction some observers wanted. The last approach to this problem was not to invoke any priority area or to directly impose overall grant ceilings but to establish the small grants element outlined earlier.

Initiation

In 1978, in a program review and report(43) to the Schools Commission the National Innovations Committee proposed that an element of 'initiation' be introduced into what was essentially a 'response' program. The Committee was keenly aware, however, that this proposal could be represented as a serious divergence from the program's rationale but felt that the dangers inherent in any group setting priorities could be outweighed by the possibility of sharpening the program's impact. The Committee's view was that:

> "...it now seems appropriate to include, in a small way, an element of 'initiation' or a few areas of emphasis. It is through a national program that such emphases can be initiated and funds shifted according to changing perceptions and priorities."

The Committee believed that it was time to make some move to accelerate the process toward new approaches.

> "The Commission has the capacity through the program to capitalise on emerging patterns of activity or perceived need in the educational community. This can be done by identifying patterns and needs in the applications submitted and giving emphasis in various ways to these."

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43. National Innovations Committee. Innovations Program Review. Canberra, 1978, pp. 7-8. (Unpublished).

It is important to stress here that what was being proposed did not pre-empt the responsive nature of the program -

> "...the areas of emphasis and any initiating activity in relation to grants should emanate from the pool of applications submitted..."

The Committee speculated on possible areas of emphasis which could arise, for example, cooperative ventures between schools, and felt that the most profitable areas would be those involving mechanisms which encouraged local initiatives and assisted in the improved educational servicing of the learners. This strategy included the coordination of projects' efforts and assumed that outcomes might therefore exceed the sum of the parts, that is, the otherwise uncoordinated projects. This process could also be conducted without immediate resort to funding, for example, by bringing together people - prospective applicants, applicants, grantees and others with similar ideas and aims - in order to encourage them to develop and possibly coordinate their ideas and activities through interaction among themselves.(44)

The Award of the Grant

The grants awarded each year under the Innovations Program comprised around 0.5 per cent of the Schools Commission's annual outlays on behalf of the central Government.

The grants, varying between 300 and 500 per year, were paid directly to individuals, groups or incorporated bodies - essentially to the people who designed the projects and who would implement them. The funds so provided and the equipment and materials purchased remained under the control of the designated grantees. Grants were not usually made to cover costs which the school authority concerned could be expected to meet as part of normal expenditure. Each grantee in accepting a grant agreed to be bound by certain conditions which included: to implement the project as approved (allowing, of course, for the inevitable modifications), to report at regular intervals, to account for

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44. This proposal was never implemented, except perhaps informally at the local level. The Commission believed that the approach required further consideration and it was never taken up again by the National Innovations Committee.

the expenditure of funds, to maintain and secure the equipment used in the project, to acknowledge the source of assistance in any material made public and to commence the project within six months of the date of offer of the grant. For its part the Commission undertook to provide whatever support was available to it to enhance the development and evaluation of the project.

In the states these grants were made through the state treasuries to which the central government funds were paid. (Prior to their offer, the acceptability of all grants and related projects were checked with the relevant education authorities and this included especially the employment of additional staff, the erection or modification of buildings and the purchase of motor vehicles. Grants were not made to proposed projects directly opposed by the responsible education authority. In these cases the Commission was prepared to make public its view about the quality or desirability of the project even though its implementation was prevented.) Payments of grants were usually made on a quarterly basis (where recurrent fund items existed) during the funding period. The Schools Commission's period of involvement in a project varied between one and three years as a general rule and this 'period of project' did not necessarily coincide with the funding period which could involve an initial, one-off payment where the grant was made up totally of non-recurrent items (for example, equipment). The period of the Commission's involvement, being an initiating period, also did not necessarily conform to the grantee's notion of the period or 'life' of the project which, of course, could pass well beyond the initial period of Commission interest and support.(45)

Implementation of a Project

The implementation of a project was a critical phase. This included not only the satisfactory implementation of the educational aspect of the project but also other aspects such as management of funds, purchase and coordination of resources, obtaining and maintaining support for the project, disseminating information about it, and commencing its evaluation.

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45. This raises the matter of the ongoing funding of projects when the initial funding source is withdrawn. See p. 114, Pt. III.

An Innovations Program grantee remained responsible for the project at all times and this included making the necessary adjustments to it as time went by as well as seeking approval for major modifications. For instance, the Schools Commission through its Innovations committee structure was interested in any variation involving a change of grantee, the location of the project, the educational program, and the budget. Before any such major change was approved the Commission might assign a counsellor or, if appropriate, a member of its administrative staff to visit the grantee and investigate the proposed change before it was considered by the relevant committee, or by the Commission itself. Needless to say, only changes which enhanced the project or enabled it to be maintained at a satisfactory level of functioning was approved. Otherwise, it was likely that the Commission would request the refund of the grant and decide upon the termination of its involvement in the project.

The supplementation of grants became increasingly necessary to accommodate fiscal inflation. From 1980 this process was carried out automatically at the time a grant was first offered and involved the building-in of a grant component to accommodate expected price rises associated with equipment and labour costs, where these were relevant to the project's budget items.

Networks

An important objective of the program was to create a framework and the conditions within which innovative ideas could be generated, developed and exchanged. Support structures were gradually established to provide for the development, protection and support of grantees and projects. These structures also assisted in the stimulation and development of new innovators and change-agents and also in the provision of opportunities for interaction between innovators, their peers and important resource people. This is the meaning of 'networks' in the Innovations Program. Examples of elements of the network approach included: the groups of counsellors in each state and regions of states; meetings of project directors, prospective project directors and counsellors at various times; an Innovators Club; full-time 'facilitators' who were constantly in touch with people inside and outside the program; and the Education Information Retrieval Service and the associated National Directory of Innovations Projects.

The function of the networks was to give both potential innovators and those presently in receipt of grants encouragement, insights, new knowledge, status, and legitimacy in the eyes of those on whose cooperation the success of the innovation was in part dependent. The mutual exchange of insights and support required networks of a predominantly human and social kind in order for the members to share not only objective information but also their more personal reflections on the strategies and approaches which they were attempting. Another aspect of the networks involved the provision of help to alleviate some of the isolation, uncertainties and frustrations of innovators and the development of their confidence.

Soon after the first rounds of grants were announced in 1974 the National Innovations Committee turned its attention to the structural components and overall framework which would support recipients of grants and provide for the encouragement of innovation and change. High priority was set upon 'network' development. In association with this the committee proceeded to 'fill out' the counsellor's role and to establish three sub-programs entitled 'Dissemination and Communication', 'Support', and 'Project Evaluation'. It was seen that the sub-programs, the role of the counsellor, and network development were interacting elements of the broader purpose of supporting practising innovators and encouraging change. Attention was also to be given to the significance and influence of other forces particularly school authorities, the wider profession, the education syndicates - the parent, teacher and subject organisations, and a small but significant grouping, the innovators not associated with the program. This intention was not followed up to the extent that might have been desirable. The workload placed upon program planners and the inevitable limit on resources caused the line to be drawn.

Support

The support and protection of a project and its personnel was a matter of major concern. The need for support systems in relation to educational innovation was underlined by the inherent nature of the innovative process in that it is often pursued by people moving outside the mainstream of educational activity and hence placing themselves, potentially at least, in isolated and vulnerable positions. The stress now placed upon the implementation phase in educational innovation also underlined the necessity for adequate support systems. Support could be provided for innovators through the program but it could also be sought and obtained elsewhere by project personnel.

The Schools Commission, its program and its grants all collectively and separately supported the innovator. A sensitive relationship between Innovations counsellors and project directors was always sought; the aim was to liberate and facilitate, not to manipulate. The existence of the Innovations Program itself gave an official imprimatur to innovative activity; Commission funding of a teacher gave recognition to the individual aside from the financial wherewithal to implement the project. The on-going availability of Commission counsellors to assist in (initial or subsequent) project development, or any other matter associated with a project, ensured that useful human (friendly), professional and technical support systems would be available for grantees and others working on their own. The Commission counsellor could be asked to provide assistance of the highest professional form, but on the other hand the assistance required might well have involved friendly encouragement bolstering confidence and the will to proceed.

An important category of support involved 'protection'. The vulnerability of projects and project directors was alluded to earlier. It tends to be more difficult to maintain internal and external support for an initiative which is significantly change-oriented and thus capable of upsetting conventional wisdom and practice. Protective support could be obtained from any of the sources outlined above and could be required in the face of institutional opposition, media or public criticism, weaknesses in project strategy, or, the inadequate provision of resources.

The Commission's support services which depended largely on the counsellor were supplied only when requested and every effort was made to ensure that they remained supportive and not inspectorial or evaluative. The program's purpose was to encourage initiative and independent action by teachers and others and this might have involved them in seeking additional kinds of support elsewhere if it was felt appropriate. The Commission encouraged project directors to use existing support services as much as possible such as those within the school, the education authority, or local agencies. The counsellor, if unable to help, could invoke the network of expertise that existed to put the project director in touch with a person who could provide the necessary specialist advice. Finally, the existence of hundreds of Innovations Program grantees, project directors, and others independent of the program provided a ready source of support, expertise and guidance which could be tapped by individual innovators.

The forms of support that could be 'obtained' were perhaps the most significant. They included those which lay within the institutional setting and may only have been potentially available at the outset of project development. The support of colleagues, parents, pupils, and the school and system authorities depended upon a range of factors including the project's perceived relevance, its visibility and the manner by which it was developed and promoted in the school and (or) community. A project failing to attract support from these quarters swam against the tide. The potential of a project was greatly strengthened if the project director could count upon not only the sympathetic consideration of school and education authorities which controlled physical, human and time resources, but also the professional support and encouragement of colleagues, and, perhaps, the 'political' support of parents and pupils. All these elements could determine whether the project became a part of the educational program of the school and whether it would exert an influence on school practices.

Dissemination and Communication

The diffusion of information took on a particular meaning within the Innovations Program because great importance was not placed upon the adoption and replication of funded projects. The Dissemination and Communication sub-program was developed as an integral part of the networking exercise to inform all interested people about what the program was doing generally and, specifically, in terms of projects. It was also intended to provide one form of public accountability for the expenditure of funds and to stimulate people to consider innovative approaches in their own work through the information about projects that was disseminated. The 'communication' element was directly related to the network approach and underlined the strategy of putting people in contact with each other.

The capacity for any element or sub-program in the network to advance the impact of any other can be illustrated by relating the Dissemination and Communication sub-program to the Project Evaluation and Support sub-program. Dissemination and Communication provided an obvious mechanism for the transmission of information deriving from project evaluations. It also assisted to make individual innovators aware of others in the field, their location and interests. In this context one of many aspects of network building was the National Directory of Innovations Projects and its associated Educational Information Retrieval Service produced and operated under the Program's auspices. The Directory contained details of all projects and grants funded through the program. It provided an entry point into the Retrieval Service which held reports of projects supplied by project directors. By these means details about projects, the experience of implementing projects and the outcomes of projects could be shared with both professional and public audiences.

The Dissemination and Communication sub-program operated each year from 1975 with grants made to state and territory Innovations committees. These committees had the principal tasks of developing the networks and implementing all the sub-programs under guidelines developed by the National

Innovations Committee on behalf of the Schools Commission. The National Committee took responsibility for national initiatives in the area such as the production of the National Directory and the development of the Information Retrieval Service. Between 1975 and 1977 this sub-program was developed and monitored by the Dissemination and Communication sub-committee of the National Committee.

The most substantial work in this area was that carried out by the local committees. Each committee developed activities distinct from the others although common features emerged such as the production of newsletters, audio-visual materials and the holding of seminars. Special and substantial dissemination and communication activities included the appointment of people to move about schools and communities on a full-time basis stimulating activity and forming linkages. Such projects included the 'Resourceful Bus' in New South Wales, the 'Mobile Counsellor' in South Australia and the 'Facilitator' in the Australian Capital Territory. In Tasmania an Innovations Club was established and in Victoria a quality periodical was produced dealing with educational innovation on a thematic basis. Victoria also experimented in 1975 with regionalised dissemination and communication work involving small group meetings in local homes. Both Queensland and Western Australia, because of their geographical size, moved towards regionalised activities too. In all these activities the central roles were performed by grantees, project-directors and counsellors often assisted by personnel from education authorities, tertiary institutions and the community. An information network combined with approaches that brought people together on a face to face basis was regarded as a powerful stimulant of creative change.

In 1977 the National Innovations Committee advised the Commission to change the emphasis in its approach to dissemination and communication. To these two activities were added two new thrusts termed, 'Stimulation and Development'. There were several reasons for this expansion in the approach. First, it was felt that the program had developed sufficiently along the path of voluntary response by applicants to enable more positive forms of intervention in the project formulation process. After three years of grant-making it became apparent that certain areas - school sectors, subject areas - of primary and secondary education had not responded to the program's initiatives as might have been expected. It was decided that in such cases a more direct tactic of stimulation of interest and awareness of the program should be commenced in areas determined by local committees. Direct stimulation of interest and activity (including the preparation of project applications) was to be conducted by counsellors and it replaced the much more indirect and passive approach of the Dissemination and Communication sub-program which anticipated that people would respond through the stimulation resulting from information diffusion.

The stimulation element, especially the general stimulation of greater numbers of applications, was abandoned in 1979 under the weight of the volume of applications received in preceding years - a legacy of earlier stimulation activity and networking operations, the momentum or ripple effect of which did not subside. The reduction in funds available to the program was also a major factor in bringing about the cessation of stimulation work of a general kind. Nevertheless, there was evidence in 1980 of a lack of applications from, and consequently grants to, certain education sectors in several states. In these cases the program's response was not to fund the inadequate proposals which emanated from these sectors but to selectively stimulate and help to develop applications for the next round of grants.

Furthermore, it was decided to intervene actively in the process of developing better quality applications for grants and as a result the process of developmental counselling was introduced.(46) Intending applicants could now give notice

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46. Developmental counselling is explained on pp. 74-75, Part III.

of an idea and request assistance in its development overall, or in part, by an Innovations counsellor. The experience of this approach suggested that it did have an important effect upon the quality, clarity and completeness of the initial project formulation. It helped a prospective Innovations grantee who had an idea but no clear notion of how to formulate it and also helped to 'tighten up' and clarify the thinking of an applicant who had a basically sound, even sophisticated proposal. It suggested that perhaps the most significant pre-grant assistance that could be offered to an applicant was that which was made before the application was actually submitted. For these reasons developmental counselling was retained within the limits of available counselling resources.

Project Evaluation

At the time the first formal approach to evaluation of Innovations projects was prepared the Commission determined that all projects would be evaluated. In preparing an approach to the evaluation of projects the National Innovations Committee's main task was to develop a rationale which would be compatible with the program's philosophy, 'ethos' and organisational framework. The Commission, for its part, had the added concern of ensuring that funds for Innovations grants were being spent responsibly and in a manner that had good prospects of achieving educational improvement. Both the Commission and the National Innovations Committee were therefore concerned to devise an evaluation plan which would provide information for a number of audiences: the project directors themselves, the profession, and the public.

From the outset the Committee assumed that the approach to evaluation would develop in stages so that gradually the methods employed would fit increasingly satisfactorily into a framework of many competing demands. The first sketch of an evaluation strategy in 1974 provided for a conventional approach involving the collection of mainly 'objective' information by independent, external evaluation consultants from most projects involving grants in excess of $5,000. It was proposed that the degree of sophistication and formality of the evaluation would vary with the size of the grant. Smaller projects would be evaluated by the project directors themselves with collegial and Schools Commission counsellor assistance where possible. In addition, every project director would be required to submit a comprehensive final report on the conduct and outcome of a project, a progress report every six months on the conduct of the project, and maintain a diary of events concerning its implementation and conduct which could be incorporated into the final report as an appendix.

The first sketch of an evaluation strategy was put aside by the Committee without trial (except for the reporting procedures) and in its place a bolder strategy was devised which explicitly left the power over project evaluation with the project director, assisted in certain cases by external specialist help. Emphasis was placed upon formative evaluation providing information to be of primary benefit to the project director thereby assisting in the development and where necessary the redirection of the project. A perceived imbalance against the value and authority of 'subjective' knowledge as opposed to 'objective' knowledge in the early strategy sketch was also to be redressed. Evaluation was to be built into the 'network' approach and was to be linked with the Dissemination and Communication sub-program and the program's support work. Under this scheme evaluation could be linked to support because the 'internal' nature of each project evaluation obviated the possibility of a helping counsellor being placed in the position of an assessor, judge or evaluator.

In September, 1975 the Commission endorsed a new set of proposals for project evaluation coupled with administrative procedures.(47) These guidelines established as the general aim of evaluation, 'the gathering and interpreting of useful information about (each) project ... (and) to make available information of value to those conducting the projects and to others engaged or interested in similar work or in educational

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47. Schools Commission. Evaluation Paper No. I: Guidelines for the Evaluation of Innovations Projects. Canberra, September, 1975.

innovation generally.' The principal objectives of project evaluation were listed as:

- to obtain information which will help the project director and the other participants to conduct and develop the project more effectively and, later, to make decisions about its continuance. Information gathered during the course of the project should be put to practical use to improve the project;
- to obtain information likely to be of value to teachers and others working in similar areas or interested in trying out similar ideas;
- to help the Schools Commission assess the value of the whole Innovations Program and determine its future directions;
- to provide administrators, parents and the general community with a basis for making decisions about support for particular innovations and about strategies for bringing about change.

Although the project itself was to be of primary importance the provision of insights for other members of the educational community was an aspect of the concept of the 'mutual sharing of experience' which was the basis of the evaluation, dissemination, and communication activities of the program.

Each project evaluation was intended to form an integral part of the project itself and the project director was to be primarily responsible for organising the evaluation of the project, although assistance in varying degrees could be provided from the program's resources.

The guidelines established a number of attitudes to the evaluation process:

- evaluation was not to be seen as an examination - the aim of evaluation was not simply to judge the 'success' or 'failure' of a project. It was assumed that much useful information could come from a project which had not achieved its original objectives;

- Honest, careful and straightforward accounts of a project by its participants and, if possible by other observers, based on their various perceptions of what occurred, would be most valuable;

- The kinds of information most useful would vary according to the nature and aims of the project;

- Judgements made by participants - teachers, students and advisers, for example, or by regular or casual observers - the school principal, colleagues or visitors could be particularly useful especially if as a result evidence from several sources could be compared. Information collected in an 'objective' way was not necessarily more legitimate or helpful;

- Evaluation rarely provides 'proof'. Projects were not isolated sets of events or closed systems. They were to be conducted within the context of a particular classroom, school and system and their effects would be influenced by the factors which could influence events within that classroom or school. It would be difficult to provide an unequivocal answer to the question of what impact a project might have had or to establish straightforward cause and effect relationships. For similar reasons the results of an evaluation could usually be applied only to the particular circumstances in which the project occurred. The process of evaluation was expected to lead to fresh insights and deeper understanding, not to a single judgement of success or failure, better or worse;

- If evaluation is based on human interaction and pursues the objectives proposed by the guidelines it was assumed that it would be helpful to the project. Involvement in the evaluation of their own projects should help participants to become more aware of what they were doing. Moreover, those assisting in the evaluation of projects should approach the projects as learners, as indeed should all who wish to discover more about worthwhile innovation in schools;

- Finally the Commission expressed appreciation that innovative projects could easily be inhibited or distorted by the demands of evaluation.

The guidelines assumed that most final evaluation reports would be written but that other forms, for example, audio-visual presentations might supplement or partly replace the written reports. The suggested structure of a report included: an account of the origins of the project, the original plan of the project, 'basic' information (for example, statistics) associated with the project, the history of the project - what happened and developed as the project proceeded, and a summary of final and general judgements of the effects of the project on the participants and others, that is, its overall impact within its own educational setting.

For most small projects the evaluation process was to be completely in the hands of the project directors and only very limited resources of the program were to be made available in those cases. Project directors were urged to enlist the assistance of a colleague or friend who was interested in the project but not directly involved in it. Through the associated 'Support' sub-program Innovations counsellors were available to offer advice and suggest possible sources of specialist help.

In certain cases additional, and sometimes substantial, provision was to be made available to assist in project evaluation. This involved projects selected by the Schools Commission on the advice of state and territory Evaluation Groups and the subsequent appointment of an evaluation counsellor and the application of additional funds to assist the project director in the evaluation process. This variant on the approach outlined above was termed augmented evaluation, however, the basic principles of the guidelines remained unchanged. Projects selected for augmented evaluation were determined as a result of requests from project directors or through selection by Evaluation Groups (in effect sub-committees of state Innovations committees) followed by negotiation with project directors for permission to undertake the more detailed evaluation. The main criterion for selection of a project was the anticipated value of the information it was hoped to obtain. Other factors considered in relation to the project were the values and priorities of the Commission, the complexity of the project, and the size of the grant. Allocations of funds to each Evaluation Group provided the financial resources to underpin the augmented evaluation work.(48) The appointment of an evaluation consultant to assist the project director was to be made in consultation with the project director and the former was to be judged capable of acting as an independent observer and adviser. The task of the evaluation consultant was to assist the project director in developing an evaluation plan, gathering and interpreting the information, and using it to improve the project. The significance of the project would determine how elaborate the evaluation effort would be. The project director, however, was to retain at all times control of the evaluation and responsibility for all reports.

In early 1977 these guidelines were suspended, the augmented evaluations underway were completed, the state Evaluation Groups were formally made evaluation sub-committees of state Innovations committees, being now directly responsible to those committees and not directly to the National Innovations Committee and the Schools Commission.

The National Committee's motivation in recommending the suspension of the guidelines stemmed from its desire to improve the strategy. The Committee was concerned to simplify and further demystify the approach to evaluation, to increase the power and responsibility of the project directors for the evaluations and more effectively and succinctly to communicate to grantees what the Commission meant by evaluation, what its purposes might be, and what benefits could accrue to grantees. Overall it was felt that the initial guidelines were unproductive for many purposes

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48. In 1975 the very modest amount of $50,000 for national distribution was set aside for this purpose. It was estimated that between thirty and sixty augmented evaluations could be conducted with these funds.

especially in terms of addressing the topic of evaluation to grantees and specifically in terms of establishing the audiences for whom evaluation reports could be prepared and what different forms of evaluation might be designed to do.

The new evaluation guidelines(49) were endorsed by the Schools Commission in August, 1977. In their subsequent implementation, practices already experimented with by the South Australian Innovations Committee were adopted. The guidelines were intended to provide a general outline of the requirements of the Schools Commission for the evaluation of projects. They were to provide the basis for further discussion between project directors and counseblors where such discussions were seen to be desirable. To assist the process of greater communication about the purposes and methods of evaluation the National Committee adopted the South Australian Committee's approach of encouraging discussion between counsellor and project director before the project commenced; of arranging seminars and briefing sessions for discussion of evaluation with and between project directors; and of assigning additional specialist advisers to project directors where necessary.

The guidelines defined evaluation for project purposes as an on-going activity - a normal and integral part of every project, not as something carried out only by experts; nor was it to be equated with standardised testing or objective measurement. The approach to evaluation was to depend on the type of project and the types of information required. Each evaluation would likely differ from others and each would be likely to involve a variety of methods of data collection (including subjective impressions) and ways of presenting the information obtained.

Under the program the main purposes of evaluation were now:

In each project

. to provide a basis for redefining and improving the project itself;

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49. The revised guidelines are set out in the Handbook for Counsellors, Op.cit., pp. 23-26.

- to help the students and project personnel involved to gain maximum benefit from the project;
- to share information about the project and about its strengths and shortcomings.

In the program as a whole

- to facilitate planning decisions;
- to enable the Schools Commission to demonstrate that its funds were being used responsibly.

It was expected that each project director would normally be involved in evaluation in three ways:

- evaluation required for accountability reasons. This was a formal requirement for all projects - reporting to the Schools Commission;
- evaluation required to improve the project and to ensure that all involved gained the greatest benefit from it. This type of evaluation was important for every project;
- the collation and provision of information to others who might benefit from knowing about the project. This aspect of project evaluation was to be quite voluntary.

In addition to these activities it was envisaged that a small number of project directors would be asked by the Schools Commission to provide further information. Some of these more comprehensive evaluation activities might be handled most effectively by the appointment of external consultants who would work in collaboration with the project director.

A further rationalisation of the organisation of the program occurred in July, 1978 and all sub-committees of both the state and national committees were abolished. The tasks of developing and managing evaluation, support and communication activities were taken over by the full committees. Funds continued to be applied annually to state committees to promote these activities, directed primarily at assisting project directors and prospective applicants.

Another later development (1980) was the generation of published material on Innovations projects especially as an outgrowth of evaluation reports. Since the time of the implementation of the first Innovations grants in 1974 project directors explained their projects to the public through the news media and professional journals. For its part the Commission through Innovations Program newsheets and magazines publicised projects, and distributed project reports through the Education Information Retrieval Service. From 1979 booklets containing case-studies of Innovations projects began to be published(50) and two substantial publications were nearing completion in 1981.

Financial Accountability

Accountability for the educational implications of the program has been outlined in terms of project evaluation, reporting and media publicity. (An initial program evaluation(51) was also conducted in 1978-79.) The provisions for financial accountability were explicit.

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(50) For example, J.R. Nicholas (ed.), The A.C.T. of Educational Innovation: Reflections and Realities, Canberra, CCAE, 1979.

(51) Schools Commission. Evaluation Studies: Report of a National Evaluation of the Special Projects (Innovations) Program. Canberra, January, 1979.

Within two months of the conclusion of the period of the Commission's involvement in a project a grantee was required to forward to the Commission an itemised statement of income and expenditure in relation to the grant. For grants of $3,000 or less the practice was to require an itemised financial statement together with a statutory declaration from the grantee supporting the statement. For grants in excess of $3,000 a qualified accountant was required to conduct an audit of the finances of projects. After perusing the documentation in relation to each grant under $3,000 and being satisfied of its bona fides the Schools Commission's Executive Officer in each state would issue a certificate on behalf of the state Minister for Education verifying that the grant had been applied for the purpose of carrying out the project. A qualified accountant for each grant over $3,000 was engaged to produce a similar certificate on behalf of the state. From 1979 all grants became subject to audit by qualified accountants.

Under the Schools Commission's Act the Commission is required to report annually to parliament with details of the disposition of funds administered by it under successive States Grants (Schools Assistance) Acts. Details of all grants made under the Innovations Program have been listed in those reports and, of course, in the National Directory of Innovations Projects.

Except in a limited number of instances, mainly associated with real estate or motor vehicles, all equipment purchased with the grant funds was to remain the property of the central government but was to be maintained under the exclusive control of the grantee. At the conclusion of the Commission's association with the project the equipment was disposed of according to guidelines established by the Minister for Education. In most cases project equipment was offered, gratis, to the educational institution in which the project took place. A range of other options existed if an educational institution was not associated with a project. If a project was ongoing then arrangements would be made for the grantee to continue to have access to the equipment.

Further Funding

This term was applied to the provision of an additional grant to a project to maintain its operation beyond the period of initial Schools Commission funding. Cases of further funding were exceptional for a number of reasons. The Innovations Program's resources were intended to stimulate and support initiatives for a period long enough for their value and benefits to become manifest. This initiating, stimulating function would be seriously eroded if the program became involved in the long-term, recurrent funding of projects. Furthermore, the Commission believed that it was generally desirable for each project to demonstrate within the context of its own community (which may be a school, a broader area, or even a system) its quality and eligibility for support. In principle, therefore, decisions about whether projects should continue or not would be made by the community concerned rather than by the Commission. The Commission advised grantees that they should seek financial support for the continuation of their projects from the relevant community. This said, the Commission was appreciative of the difficulties that could arise for grantees seeking continuation funding from the local level and, in the case of school projects, for educational authorities already heavily committed to find the additional resources to enable a valuable project to continue. Further funding is discussed on p. 152ff, Part IV.

PART IV: ISSUES, REFLECTIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS

ISSUES AND PROBLEM AREAS

Teachers: The Power to Change

In practical terms school-based change rests heavily with teachers. Teachers have enormous potential power both as professionals and practitioners. It would seem important, therefore, to gauge teachers' opinions about the types of changes required in schools and their power to influence them.

A survey(1) conducted in 1972 and again in 1977 sought principals' reactions to the desirable improvements they thought their staffs would most welcome and, on the second occasion, what had been accomplished by 1977. The information obtained emphasised the gross inadequacy in educational resource provision in the 1950's and 1960's and the difficulty in rectifying even physical inadequacies in a period of five or so years with the massive sums spent from 1972 onwards. Teachers sought in 1972 and continued to seek in 1977 major improvements in physical resources, more staff, more specialist staff, and greater staffing stability and staff support. The development of curriculum - methods, materials and content - rated very low in both surveys and actually fell as a desirable improvement for primary teachers and increased for secondary teachers. The development of school-community relationships barely rated a mention in either 1972 or 1977. Clearly the focus of principals and teachers had been on the modernisation of physical conditions and working conditions while professional challenges and the assumption of professional autonomy appeared to be second-order priorities. The 1977 survey suggested that much more of the same was still perceived to be needed by the professionals even though much had been achieved since 1972. Moreover, the power of the central administration was still seen as important in decisions about which improvements have been made, often resulting in a mismatch between what was desired at the school level and what was actually received.

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1. M.C. Grassie, Op. cit.

Of importance is the fact that the initiative for, and capacity to provide, the most sought after improvements were believed to rest with central administrations and outside the scope of direct teacher influence. It was suggested that,

> "...prior conditioning in the sense that education departments have always been expected to make decisions about resource allocation, innovations and change"(2)

may have contributed to attitudes of personal helplessness regarding the capacity to change things. Further, principals did not see either themselves or their staff playing other than minor roles in bringing about significant educational change. The conclusions reached by the author of the survey are that teachers appeared to judge major changes as being costly and highly visible and therefore ones outside their province to conceive and initiate. School people, it was suggested, were still reacting and expected to continue to react, to initiatives taken in higher realms of system administrations. (3)

These survey findings confirm what has been observable. They came at a time of transition, however, and may well have reflected traditional views, still in the majority, but which were being modified. In 1977 school-based decision-making in all its forms was only beginning to move substantially from passing rhetoric to practical application. The idea of teacher-led and conceived educational innovation was only just beginning to engage large numbers of teachers. This said, the responses of teachers to the Innovations Program supported the survey by suggesting that, as a profession, they had not yet reached the point of initiating deep and far-reaching innovations in schools. There are many possible reasons for this. Further professional development and confidence was clearly required. If the nature of projects funded under the auspices of the Innovations Program were seen as representing stages in the development of teachers from whom more complex and fundamental innovations might emerge in the future a better basis for an ongoing strategy of encouragement of innovation and change could be established.

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2. Ibid, p. 122.
3. Ibid, p. 122.

School-based initiatives in innovation rest upon enculturation as much as 'technology'. Breaking out of psychological structures, achieving confidence in expressing one's 'professionalism', learning to collaborate with others, tentatively seeking power and using it are essential ingredients together with motivation, each building on the other. The literature on educational innovation tends now to discount motivation to change as a key issue because it is assumed that the exists. Emphasis has moved to the technical problems of implementation of innovation. However, the bridge between the desire to implement changes and the methods to be employed in implementation is the confidence that it is all possible. This critical factor is not necessarily learned at off-site workshops or by homilies from superiors but in progressive, practical involvement in the process of innovation however mundane. Confidence arises from some practical evidence that one has the capacity to change things and will be supported in doing so.

Applications to the Innovations Program seeking grants to implement projects provided a fairly accurate indication of the changes in schools and curricula teachers wanted and what they believed they were capable of carrying through.(4) These changes were largely confined to areas of perceived current competence, areas where freedom to innovate existed and areas incorporating the teacher's greatest preoccupation - the students.(5) Hence curriculum change and modified teaching methods had priority over organisational change.(6)

The nature of the applications provided a reasonably accurate picture because the program did not direct applications to any specific priority area but responded to problems and issues as perceived by those in school communities. What was not necessarily communicated was change that teachers and others

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4. See Schools Commission. National Directory of Innovations Projects. Volume 2 - 1977-79 Projects. Canberra, 1979.

5. W.J. Campbell, et.al., 'Being a Teacher...' Op.cit.

6. See Tables XIII and XIV, Appendix.

would have liked to implement had they felt able to obtain the permission of the relevant authorities. What many teachers appear to want initially, and the Innovations Program was able to provide, was the claim on additional resources that a grant of money could produce and recognition and support for their initiative which a body such as the Schools Commission could give.

Innovation in a Federal System

The strategy of the Innovations Program assumed direct relations between the Schools Commission or its agents, the state and territory Innovations committees and counsellors, and people in schools and local communities. Furthermore, it assumed that close working relations would be established with state Education Departments which would give their backing to local initiatives stimulated in part, and backed financially, by a central government source. Along with this expected state acceptance of such a program was the view that no major changes in education systems, in their management or organisation, would be necessary for projects to be satisfactorily accepted, planned, implemented and, where appropriate, continued. At the same time the existence of a central government sponsored program to support educational innovation at the school level implied that insufficient attention was being given to this activity by the state and local authorities.

The existence of an independent program had its benefits for systems in a number of ways. First, it provided a source of scarce funds that could be directed freely to people working in schools. Such people would not normally have ready access to the funds of the education authorities which were for the most part tied into conventional, ongoing funding routines. Second, the authorities were not required to align themselves explicitly with possibly controversial or avant-garde projects. In this way such projects could be trialled without being aborted by the educational or political sensitivities of system administrators, or, even ministers for education. These people could also subsequently align themselves with 'successful' projects and consider assistance for those which required continued funding. They could also disclaim responsibility for those projects perceived to be 'unsuccessful'.

The major system authorities concerned with the implications of the Innovations Program for their schools were the state Education Departments and the Catholic Education Commissions. These authorities gave, over the period of the program's existence, considerable support to it.(7) The vast bulk of the program's funds, and projects supported by it, went to the schools of the two authorities in each state and territory. Moreover, most of the counsellors and local Innovations committee personnel were drawn from these schools. Each authority in each state had a liaison officer appointed to the Innovations committee to keep both the Schools Commission and the relevant authority informed of each other's views, attitudes to particular projects, and the implications of supporting such initiatives. This framework of liaison was extended to involve consultation on the appointment of counsellors and committee personnel. In 1979 discussions commenced with the state Education Departments to explore ways in which the program could improve its association with state authorities both in terms of how the authorities could support and back up projects funded in schools, and how the program could take greater account of the policies and planned directions of the authorities.

Unlike the Schools Commission's Disadvantaged Schools Program over which they have considerable control the state education authorities had little control over the Innovations Program. With the passage of time perceptions of threat, insecurity arising from inability to control, and wariness about what the program might engender in schools and amongst teachers

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7. J. Foyster, Report of a National Evaluation of the Special Projects (Innovations) Program. Schools Commission. Canberra, 1979. p. 73. The report cited here is an abbreviated version of the full report of J. Foyster which is contained in three volumes.

appeared to have diminished greatly.(8) This was due to a number of factors. An important one was that senior educational administrators did support the idea of fostering local initiative and believed that improvements could arise from that source. Second, the program through the projects it supported demonstrated that its activities did not undermine the authority of the systems or the 'good' education of their pupils but contributed in positive ways to the advancement of teacher professionalism, community involvement and broader and deeper curriculum offerings. These views are reinforced by the decisions of four education authorities to establish smaller but similar innovations or school-based curriculum funding programs since the time of the Innovations Program's establishment. (9)

The most durable and determined opposition to the program came from the Western Australian Education Department and the State Minister for Education. Since 1974 this authority showed a good deal of antagonism to initiatives sponsored by the central government through the Schools Commission. Such antagonism began to abate around 1979 and particularly from the time of the appointment of the Director-General of Education to the Commission. The Department's main complaint appeared to centre on the interventionist role of the Commission, its work in sponsoring new initiatives which it expected the Department to collaborate in, and the Commission's interest in supporting teacher initiatives by way of direct contact. Manifestations of this grievance included its demand to vet all Innovations applications prior to them being assessed by the state Innovations committee, its frequent but unsupported complaint about disproportionate allocations of funds and positions on the Western Australian Innovations Committee going to the non-government schools sector, and the general loss of control over its teachers that it believed resulted from their capacity to make direct applications

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8. Summary of reactions in discussions with education authority representatives, 1979, cited above.

9. These programs operated under the auspices of state Education Departments in New South Wales, Tasmania and Western Australia, and in the Australian Capital Territory through the ACT Schools Authority.

to the Commission for grants. The Department was also not happy that its teachers' project applications could be appraised by counsellors from the Western Australian Counselling Group drawn from non-government schools. (Such concern had its other side. In 1980 the Western Australian Catholic Education Office expressed its concern over the appointment of the 1981 convenor of the Western Australian Innovations Committee who was a research officer in the central office of the Department. The Catholic Education Office indicated that while it had no opposition to the person involved it would prefer to see in future a more 'independent' person appointed to the convenorship.) The Western Australian Education Department had a long history of centralised control which provided little room for participation by even the local school communities. The Innovations Program was viewed as a mechanism for encouraging school communities to adopt initiatives and practices which could be contrary to the policies of the Department.

This conflict between the Commission and the Department was usually conducted at the level of the chief officers but was, as suggested above, more than a matter of a clash of personalities. At times, particularly in 1978 when the Department refused entry by non-government school counsellors into government schools and complained of the under-weighting of government school representation on the Western Australian Innovations Committee, the possibility of closing down the program in Western Australia was mooted within the Commission but such action, and any equivalent action by the state authorities preventing the program's operation, never eventuated. Throughout the period 1974-79 the Commission stood firm on the matter of the program's independence and maintained its organisational features intact. In other words the Department could prevent projects being implemented in government schools but it could not prevent their independent appraisal and assessment and the publication of the results.

While the state authority in Western Australia never pushed the matter to the point of seriously hampering the operation of the program (as it could have done by having the State Treasury refuse to process funds under the States Grants (Schools Assistance) Acts) the Commonwealth for its part carefully chose convenors of the state Innovations committee who were acceptable to the Department but who were also known for their independence of the Department. The Commission also allowed the Department to read applications from government school personnel prior to them being appraised. This allowed the Department to consider its approach to any 'problem' projects and to foreshadow special difficulties relating to such matters as building construction and the employment of personnel. Departmental vetos of projects at this stage (and in 1977 and 1978 this did occur) were ignored by the state committee on instruction from the Commission. Over the period 1974-81 there is no record of any Western Australian government school project being finally vetoed by the Department on other than strictly appropriate grounds, e.g. building regulations or the like.

Over all, however, system authorities gave considerable support to the program by taking a low-key, non-interventionist approach to its operation in schools under their control, by readily allowing their personnel to participate extensively in program management and associated professional tasks (e.g. counselling work), by agreeing to continue the funding of a small but select number of projects and, perhaps most importantly, by the considerable human and material resources which were introduced into projects by virtue of their school-based character.

Another matter raised by the federal context of the program was the way the notion of federalism itself impinged on the program. It was always conceived as a national program rather than a federal one. For instance, the program constituted more than an amount of funds to be dispersed on a per-capita basis to the States. It involved a national strategy, the program being the instrument of that strategy, for the fostering and support of educational innovation at the local and school level. The strategy was sufficiently broad in conception to embrace state and local aspirations and policies and flexible enough to accommodate local priorities especially as they were perceived by those at the grass roots. Its organisational arrangements were varied to meet the desire of some state Innovations committees to explore alternative organisational arrangements and these were explained earlier in terms of the regionalisation of some aspects of decision-making.

Indeed the progress towards regionalising the operation of the program was consistent with the Schools Commission's concern for devolution - shifting the locus of decision-making closer to the local level. In the process of moving such aspects as project selection increasingly closer to the grass roots the explicitly federalist organisational pattern of the program was modified. Although it was stated above that the program was a national rather than a federal one its organisational pattern was federalist in character insofar as the committee structure was based upon a duality: national and state. This initial pattern followed convention and was built upon a loose assumption of the primacy of state control in administration. It produced a simple entity (a state Innovations committee) to assist in the promotion and implementation of the program in the states. By 1979, in several states the process of regionalisation within education authorities themselves progressed to the point where the regional directorates of the education authority were possibly the more appropriate administrative cells for the program to liaise with. Developments in this latter respect were being implemented in South Australia in 1980 and 1981.

The federal nature of the program's organisation sometimes affected the way members of its committees viewed their roles. 'States rights' attitudes surfaced on a few occasions in terms of the disbursement of funds and particularly in terms of the National Innovations Committee's final determination of which large projects would be recommended to the Schools Commission for funding. The members of the National Innovations Committee, all of whom came from states or territories but who did not represent organisations, states or territories, maintained overall a strong national rather than federalist consciousness in their approach. This was clearly evident in the support by program participants for the allocation of funds by means other than a per-capita formula.

Impact and Direction of the Program

The literature on educational change is quite inconclusive about how change and innovation can be engendered. Consequently many visions and propositions exist for the development of change strategies the purpose of which would make education, as it occurs in schools, more vital, relevant and adaptable to changing circumstances and clienteles. It is inevitable therefore that there were and will be many, often conflicting, views about the Innovations Program - its objectives, its method of operation, and the use of its resources.

Certainly it was the only program operating with the explicit and single purpose of fostering change in schooling, a purpose reinforced by its prominent title: Innovations Program. But its focus was quite narrow on several dimensions. For instance, it was concerned with small units of people, individuals in most cases; mainly people working in schools, classrooms and communities. One of its main aims stated variously but consistently over time was to encourage and support the development of the individual and collective initiatives of people working in and for schools (students, parents, teachers, administrators and others). This was a consciously imposed limitation on the program's approach. It followed that the program's objectives were to bring immediate benefits to relatively small groups of pupils and to act upon the professional and self concepts of a range of people in the school community.

In the pursuit of such an approach the Innovations Program was to be seen as only one of many change strategies required to improve Australian primary and secondary education. It had to be seen as acting alongside broader curriculum development, the initiatives of education authorities at the system level, and reforms in the industrial field involving, say, the status and remuneration of teachers and promotion systems. Because it was largely a response program it could be shaped to complement and supplement many initiatives being developed from initiatives in other quarters. To have expected the program to cast its net across a broader area or to deal with units much larger than individuals or groups would have been to seriously weaken its impact. The Schools Commission's belief was that useful work could be accomplished in the area of micro-innovation and in the cultural sphere of the development of new attitudes and behaviours amongst teachers and associated community people. Said differently, education authorities were seen to attend to the needs of teachers, pupils and schools in the context of their, the authorities, perceptions of what must be done. The Innovations Program attempted to attend to the interests and needs of people at the local level in terms of outlooks they were capable of creating for themselves.

There were those who wished to see evidence of program 'success' in terms of structural change.(10) Others, expressed doubt supporting individuals and groups at the local level because in the view of these people significant change could only be tangibly and significantly produced at the whole-school, regional or system level utilising large-scale projects directed by people occupying the more powerful positions in the educational hierarchies of education authorities. Again, others claimed that scarce resources should be ploughed into initiatives which had 'central' or 'mainline' purposes, which produced significant reorientations in organisation and practice rather than small-scale variations at the school or classroom level. Some critics saw Innovations Program funding as occasionally supporting faddism, an individual's whims and fancies or sometimes palliatives rather than the 'hard stuff' of which profound change is made. The question implicitly asked was what could be gained from the widespread support of small-scale projects involving the short-term funding of individuals and groups? A different question asked by those who believed something significant could result from this approach was what was the minimum amount of total program funding which would allow the objectives to be achieved? Or, put another way, must there be a necessary critical mass of projects before discernible changes in attitudes, behaviours and practices appear across a system? Furthermore, how long does it take before such changes become discernible, and how would these be assessed?

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(10) These and the other views were presented to the Commission from time to time in correspondence, conferences and during consultations with interested groups and authorities in the states.

Apart from the proposition that more applications should be stimulated and funded in certain priority areas another proposal was to identify special categories of projects arising out of the volunteered range of applications submitted. Identification of such categories (which could include, for instance, school-community interaction or the development of puppetry as an educational tool) would be the preliminary step in bringing project leaders together to share experiences and to develop the projects further. The objective of this exercise would be to maximise in aggregate the outcomes of the projects whose impact individually and in isolation might otherwise be considerably less. This proposal which would not have upset the response nature of the program (that is, avoided directions as to which types of applications could be accepted) was considered for implementation in 1979 (see pp. 94-95, Part III).

The reduction in funds available to the program in itself promoted consideration of ways to maintain the direction and impact of the program. While funds remained at a relatively high-level the achievement of 'spread' - making many contacts through grants and counsellor visits to project sites - was not a major problem. After 1978, however, unless the average size of grants had been reduced, or grants focused on a smaller number of areas, the capacity of the program to cast its net over a wide area of the nation's schools and communities would have become restricted. Rather than make grants in only one sector at a time, for example, primary education, or, support applications only from rural schools or those dealing with special populations or curriculum areas, there was a tendency to reduce the size of grants(11) and to introduce an additional component into the annual funding regime involving small grants with a ceiling of $1,000. In this way the distribution of grants geographically, between primary and secondary education, and between a large range of special populations and curriculum areas was maintained.

A comparatively large population, the applicants who failed to receive supporting grants, should be considered in terms of program impact. This group tended to far exceed in number those receiving grants.(12) The situation arose because the response to invitations to submit applications always far exceeded the program's financial capacity to meet the needs of all applicants with worthwhile projects. Despite the fact that up to forty per cent of these applicants managed to implement their projects to some extent, and thereby helped effectively to dispel the notion that 'innovation equals grants', the rejection of proposals from enthusiastic, capable and committed people was viewed very seriously. Various responses were made to this situation. In the first place the size of grants was reduced and some small grants of under $1,000 were offered each year. Second, in inviting applications the Commission emphasised the decreasing chances of support being offered and this effectively cut the number of applications received between 1979 and 1980 by half. This second approach merely disguised a situation and made more comfortable the task of rejecting a smaller number of applicants. There remained, it was believed, a large number of people who would formerly have committed themselves to the formulation of an idea and the preparation of an application who, as a result, remained unresponsive.

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11. For instance, in 1980 the percentage of grants awarded which exceeded $20,000 was 4.2 per cent compared with 8.7 per cent in 1979.

12. In 1979, a particularly difficult year, of 2089 applications only 315 grants were offered. To this must be added 1146 small grant (under $1,000) applications for which 276 grants were offered. For 1980 applications fell to around 1,000 in total of which some 300 received grant support (not including small grants). A detailed set of statistics relating to the award of grants is contained in J. Foyster, Op. cit.

The most positive response made to this problem by the local Innovations committees was to use the counsellor service to make personal contact with applicants at the time they were advised that support would not be forthcoming, to explain the reasons for this and to offer assistance in bringing the project 'to life' by alternative means.

Funding According to Need or Quality

This issue flows directly from the topic considered in the previous section. It relates to such questions as why one project is funded and another not funded, or, why more Innovations money is not directed to areas of demonstrable 'need'.

The importance of 'need' as a concern of the Schools Commission arose as a result of one of the terms of reference given to the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission which required it to consider the immediate financial needs of schools. The Committee decided to make its needs assessments along two dimensions: inputs of resources to schools and school systems, and the degree of disadvantage of groups of pupils in particular schools. It was assumed that if all students who were capable were to attain at least a common minimum educational standard, more school resources would be consumed by some students in reaching this standard than by others. This position accorded with one of two emphases of the Interim Committee, namely, equality. The other emphasis was to be placed upon quality, concern for which was established as the prime justification for the Innovations Program. As a result the allocation of Innovations Program funds was not expressly linked to a concept of need as was the case for most of the other Commission programs. Moreover, it has been argued earlier that 'innovation' is concerned with the introduction of something new or with creative improvement and as such it cannot be tied to a concept of need - of schools or school populations from which proposals might emerge. On the other hand, a needs concept could be applied in terms of support for innovative initiatives in areas or amongst populations identified as in need of the greatest educational change and improvement. For this to occur priorities would have had to be built into the program's strategy. The whole question of providing greatest support in areas identified as being in greatest need as opposed to funding the best innovative proposals raised in some people's minds the degree to which any program of the Schools Commission could ignore the needs concept in the allocation of funds.

While the program's strategy did not embrace in operational terms a needs concept and anyone or any school associated with primary and secondary education was eligible to approach it, nevertheless the general public concern for a number of particular areas of schooling and the Commission's own stated priorities affected the types of projects funded. The number of quality projects available for support meant that any concern for priorities did not materially affect the quality criterion for selecting projects for funding. Those areas of concern, notably with populations deemed to be 'disadvantaged', and priorities, for example, the development of greater school-community interaction, were factors carefully weighed by state Innovations committees in selecting projects for support. The overriding concern with quality, however, did not permit poorly conceived projects in these areas to be supported.

In a sense the program contained its own 'needs' issue. If it was to be a program concerned to foster change, change conceived by whom should receive priority? If the quality of proposals was the prime concern because it was assumed that this would give greatest immediate impetus to the change process, might this not result in reinforcement of those who were already highly innovative people who really needed little fostering? Another way of putting this is to ask what capacities for innovation and project formulation should a person have developed before his/her work was regarded highly enough to receive an Innovations grant? In answer to these questions the course steered was to support a range of people from 'vanguard elements' to people modestly trying to grapple for the first time with the circumstances of their local setting, providing all the projects reached a certain minimum standard of quality.

Although the concept of 'innovation in context' was employed to put a particular construction on the definition of the term innovation it has relevance here because it required analysis of a proposed project and its proponent against local circumstances, not against some absolute standard for a project or the proponent. Indeed, the term 'impact in context' could have been employed to determine the allocation of resources amongst various innovative efforts. For instance, where might program funds have been best employed: in a 'high-powered' project to be implemented in a highly innovative context, or, in a project innovative only in its context which was itself conservative and demonstrably in need of change? In setting such projects against each other selection of the latter might have been justified if fostering change, developing the capacities of committed people, and generating climates conducive to change had been regarded as the key criteria in allocating resources. Here, in relative terms the impact in context might have been greatest. Alternatively, if the quality and external impact of projects had been the criteria for selecting projects then the former would probably have been selected. The selection of projects for funding was immersed in value judgements. The problem outlined here is one with which state Innovations committees had to grapple and make judgements according to the information available and the character of each set of applications considered.

The Level and Importance of Funds and Their Allocation

The potency of the Innovations Program depended to a considerable extent upon the level of funds available to it, the activity and effectiveness of its counsellors, and its capacity to generate a climate in which innovation and change were considered both desirable and important. In a time of contraction in the level of funds available to the education sector the potency of a program such as this was bound to be affected. That the program continued to exist at a modest but effective level of funding during these times (1976-81) was an indication of the growing acceptance of the notion that education should have an in-built capacity for innovation and experiment at the school and classroom level. In the longer term it may be desirable for innovation and field-based, local level experimentation to be generated from voluntary professional involvement and community awareness, both being backed by the domestic resources of the school, community and education system. In other words, in the longer term the approach to innovation and change might spring largely from a domestic mechanism capable of responding to changing circumstances. It is anticipated that this could develop out of an increasing awareness of the need for, and potential of, innovation to produce necessary improvements. It might also arise out of the increasing capacity of the teaching profession to express itself, and the community to involve itself, in determining the character of educational provision.

The program's work was nowhere near finished in 1981, hence the availability of a satisfactory level of funds was all-important. As these funds were eroded between 1977 and 1981 it became ever more important to concentrate on finding ways and means to maximise the impact of its scarce resources. This need coupled with the strong emphasis placed upon the development and stimulation of people in the educational process influenced the tendency to scale down the size of grants. This was the prime justification for the introduction of small grants up to $1,000 in 1979 and the expansion of the concept in money terms from about six per cent of the program's budget in 1979 to fifteen per cent in 1980.

A program such as the Innovations Program inevitably carries with it a hidden curriculum - implicit values and meanings. Of special concern were assumptions such as 'innovation equals money' or innovation is synonymous with an Innovations Program grant. Even more unsatisfactory from the Commission's view was the notion that those receiving Innovations grants constituted a class - 'the innovators ' - in the education community. A corollary of this was that those failing to attract support might be in some way unworthy - the failed who aspired to be innovators. These assumptions would appear to be inevitable to some extent in a situation where the enthusiasm to try out an idea and the seeking of support are so widespread as to over-tax the availability of funds. The inevitable competition for scarce resources may have engendered better quality submissions but it probably also eliminated the more tentative, less assertive applicant and led to disappointment and loss of motivation amongst those whose applications were rejected. That these dysfunctional consequences were not so significant for the program is supported by evidence that perhaps up to forty per cent of applicants failing to receive financial support managed to proceed to implement their projects.(13)

Nevertheless, the competitiveness of the funding situation continuously exercised the minds of National Innovations Committee members. While proposals such as using a ballot to select projects for funding from the pool of quality submissions, and allocating a small nominal grant to all quality proposals were canvassed, attention was focused on the use of the counsellor in personally following up letters to applicants whose projects did not receive support. In this way applicants could talk over the situation with a counsellor, have the reasons for the Commission's decision explained, and be offered limited help in finding alternative ways of implementing their project.

Various approaches to the national allocation of the program funds were explored. The program was conceived as a developing instrument for the encouragement of change processes. It was not simply a mechanism for distributing moneys to 'special projects'. Hence it avoided the role of dispenser of federal funds and thereby allocating funds between the states on a per-capita basis. A range of distributive options was considered. These included, apart from using a per capita formula, the allocation of some funds to all quality proposals, allocation on the basis of the proportion of applications received by each state, and allocations by the proportion of quality proposals generated by each state.(14) The latter method was employed

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13. J. Foyster, Op. cit., Volume 2 (full report), p. E.6.

14. See p. 86, Part III for explanation.

for the longest period of the program's existence, with the component of the project funds relating to large grants (those exceeding $20,000) being dispersed by the National Innovations Committee by virtue of its power to make the final recommendations on these grants.

Although the use of a quality criterion for allocating funds between states inevitably produced allocations which diverged from those anticipated under a per-capita formula the degree of divergence was not extreme. The relative population sizes of the states produced groups of state-based applications which usually matched those populations in proportion. The state samples were usually so large as to produce similar proportions of quality proposals - usually around forty per cent of each state's contribution of applications. Avoiding a per-capita allocation and allocating funds according to either the proportions of proposals received or the quality of proposals assessed did allow flexibility in allocating funds to states where, on occasions, more applications or more quality applications were generated than would be expected on a per-capita basis.

A per-capita formula would have been essentially a politically-based response to funding equity and would have provided no satisfactory basis for following up initiatives in educational innovation. For instance, a state may have either generated more or less applications than a per-capita formula would suggest. If it produced without contrivance more applications and more quality ones why should it not have been appropriately rewarded? For instance, if Queensland had the capacity to produce in one year a similar number of quality proposals to Victoria why should Queensland's allocation of funds have not been commensurate with Victoria's and not fifty per cent less? An even more pressing question was whether funds should have been allocated in quite the opposite sense. Let us say a state produced a number of quality proposals well below that which its population size would have suggested. Could not a case have been made for a special allocation of program funds not to poor quality proposals in that state but to a program of stimulation and development in its schools? Here would have been a clear case of the program fostering change.

The Relative Emphasis Upon Product and Process

The Innovations Program was not concerned exclusively with either process or product; that is, the ways and means change could be generated, or the products of such efforts. It was concerned with both aspects and was far more concerned with processes and the development of people through these processes than might have been assumed from its focus on making grants to support projects. There was no assumption that the means were clearly separable from the ends and certainly not that there was one best way of achieving desired ends. The project was the means of benefiting the pupil-clients in the short-term but the support by the program of individuals, the development of their capacities, the acknowledgement of their initiative and powers of discretion, the advancement of personal and professional concepts, and the reinforcement of commitment to improvement were the more durable and long-term benefits espoused and sought under the program's auspices. The whole range of processes conducted, from the interaction between counsellors, applicants and grantees to those between grantees, administrators, colleagues, pupils and community, had an intrinsic value of their own and were not purely instrumental in terms of project implementation. These processes contained their own agenda items, including building new relationships and forms of interaction, causing critical assessments to be made of organisational arrangements which impinged upon the project, and in developing a spectrum of skills including those of a political and advocacy nature. The main outcomes of program funding may have stemmed from the processes undergone rather than the success of the project itself. An implication of this acknowledgement of a 'process' view of innovation is that funds could be allocated as much to a proponent as to a proposal.

The Unit of Innovation

Four preferred qualities of the change process in education would appear to be that the changes are visible, quick-acting, profound and widespread. Consonant with these criteria is the notion that innovation should be systemic in nature. Worthwhile change and innovation should be widely disseminated and adopted so that its benefits can be experienced by as many people as possible. In Australia, the power of centralised education authorities pursuing policies bound up with equality of opportunity has tended to ensure that conceptions of change and innovation have included the qualities mentioned above. The unit within which innovations have been developed has tended to be the system as a whole or a large element of it, for example, the primary or secondary sector. As a result innovation has often been imposed on school people even when consultation with the interested parties has been quite extensive. The recipients of the innovation have become the agents of the education authority at the stage of implementation. Most often this approach has involved a product notion of innovation; attempts have usually been made to reorientate the thinking of practitioners and parents and training schemes have been devised to equip people for new roles and practices.

The unit of innovation can be much smaller than this. It is inevitably smaller when the initiative and responsibility for creativity are passed to the local level. The features of innovative activity on this scale tend to include a process as well as a product element. The experience of initiating, creating and implementing tend to fall as one on the proponent whether it be the individual or the group. Even where the product is of paramount concern the process by which the product is realised is important. Innovation on this smaller scale, that is, at the school, classroom or individual person level has emerged in response to a number of factors. These include, first, the need to differentiate educational offerings to meet the clientele of different communities or even different clienteles in a school or classromm; second, there is the view that people at the local level have perceptions which may more readily pick up local needs; and third, the increasing desire and capacity of those at the local level to assume greater power over decision-making and the action which flows from it. There is, therefore, the belief that the more local people intervene in the educational process the more competent they will become in managing and directing it and hence the more satisfactory will be the provision of the service to the clients.

If the assumptions about locally based innovation are at least partially accepted, and centrally directed, systemic innovation is acknowledged as having its place too, then the question still remains about what is the most desirable unit of innovation at the local level. Is it the district, a cluster of schools, a single school itself, or groups of people or individuals in a single school? The most appropriate response would be to accept all these entities as desirable, depending upon circumstances. The unit of innovation adopted tends to depend upon the nature of the innovation and, in the case of the larger units listed, the capacity of the various sub-units, for example, the individual schools in a cluster or the subject departments within a school, to coperate and identify common goals. While the Schools Commission through the Innovations Program offered support to district and whole-school initiatives, the range of applications tended to embrace all units because of the open response nature of the program, and especially those coming from individuals and groups.

Those closely associated with the program (that is, the members of its committee structure) wished to see greatest encouragement given to school-based innovation initiated by individuals and groups. Support for this approach remained throughout the life of the program. There were many reasons for this. It was believed that local, school problems and needs were often more accurately perceived by those people nearest to them; that where such needs and problems were addressed by people in hierarchical positions remote from the special setting the responses could be slow in coming and irrelevant to the special character of the situation; and that educational bureaucrats and curriculum experts had had a virtual monopoly of the exercise of educational innovation in the past, that their record of success had been poor and that the practitioners of the local level should be encouraged to play a greater role. In 1974, there was no great enthusiasm for recognising the school as the unit of innovation even though school-level innovation was being focused upon. At the time it appeared that most schools lacked the capacity to mount whole-school solutions to important problems and for establishing supporting infrastructures for innovative effort. To use Goodlad's terms(15) doubt would have been expressed about the existence of a 'body politic' made up of parents and pupils, about the notion of teachers as a 'team' and about 'institutional personality'. If the creative capacity of a school is a function of the extent to which it is able to integrate its internal organisation and to develop productive relationships between all its human resources then many schools, particularly secondary schools, appeared to lack the necessary qualities. The school itself was therefore considered to be an inadequate unit on which to base innovative efforts. The widespread lack of such features and capacities in schools only increased the desirability of formulating action to achieve them(16). The emphasis upon the encouragement of individuals and groups in schools to make changes and to enter into new professional and community relationships was one method of promoting the development of the 'organismic wholeness' to which Goodlad referred.

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15. J.I. Goodlad, 'The Individual School and its Principal: Key Setting and Key Person', Op.cit.

16. Another program of the Schools Commission, the Disadvantaged Schools Program, concentrated upon encouraging individual school communities to come together to examine the needs of their schools and to implement improvement-oriented projects on a collaborative basis. The Commission's national project fostering approaches to locally based school evaluation was another example of moves to foster whole-school efforts for improvement. Both these efforts were as much about developing institutional capacities as they were about specific innovative projects.

Indeed the Innovations Program could be seen as a stage in the development of a broader whole-school-based approach. As a result of the stimulus of the program many hundreds of people in school communities did learn to take initiatives and to exercise more power over their local settings. Such a development would appear to be a prerequisite for a broadly based whole-school approach to innovation. The School Improvement Program, which in 1981 the Schools Commission recommended should replace the Innovations Program, was a logical development, subject to two provisos: first, that it was accepted that individual and small-group initiatives would continue to be valuable and second, that much of the work within the School Improvement Program would involve efforts to develop institutional capacities for innovation in much the same way as the Innovations Program had been directed to develop the capacities of individuals.

At the close of the Innovations Program there was considerable support within the committee structure for greater efforts to ensure that projects were better related to and integrated within their local settings. (This view did not necessarily apply to all projects, of course.) In Part III the role of the counsellor in assessing the value of a proposed project to its local setting and the response to it from that setting was outlined. This process was rudimentary and necessarily limited, partly to ensure that the control of the project remained with its proposer. Nevertheless, it was increasingly acknowledged that in the implementation of many projects there was a need to develop greater co-operation between staff and for a project to be accorded greater acceptance as an integral part of the school's overall development.(17) Projects developed in this way could more effectively influence the character of a school and thus have a greater impact.

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17. As the Rand Study showed, the interface between a project and its environment is important. Unless there is interaction between the two, resulting in 'mutual adaptation', it is unlikely that a project will have much impact on its institution and alternatively little support for the project will be forthcoming from the institution. Rand Studies, Op.cit., Volume 5, pp. 8-9.

It is therefore possible to conceive of three 'levels' for innovation at the school level: first, an individual's project relatively isolated within the school; second, the individual or group project explicitly linked with a developing school plan; and third, a project developed by the school community on a formal basis as a whole-school project.

Whatever combination of levels of innovation are employed there would appear to be few projects likely to be implemented in schools which should not be considered against the school's overall philosophy or development plan (such as it might be) and few projects which could not benefit from access to additional resources available within the school. The notion of whole-school support for such projects is important. This, it is suggested, may be a more critical concept to pursue than explicitly promoting the idea of the school as the unit of innovation.

The Management of Innovation and the Infrastructure of Schools

Innovative schemes which arise within a school introduce new pressures upon school management. As soon as a project impinges upon organisational matters beyond the classroom the school's administrative machinery is involved. Locally based initiatives are now so widespread as to produce the need for an assessment of the role of the institution in supporting them. This is particularly the case where initiatives involve only a part of the school and are introduced by rank and file staff members.

Some of the considerations which might be taken into account in establishing an organisational climate supportive of innovation and change are as follows.(18) The character or

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18. See also O.E.C.D./C.E.R.I. Creativity of the School, Conclusions of a Programme of Inquiry. Paris, 1978. Chapter IV.

'personality' of a school deriving from a clearly thought out school philosophy is important. Such a philosophy will accept the need for ongoing adjustment, modification and change in relation to school organisation, curriculum, teaching style and so on. It will place emphasis upon the school personnel as a team but value individual initiative and encourage the latter by providing for professional freedom or 'operating space'. This means granting to each member of staff, and also interested parents, room to take initiative and assume responsibility both of which may lead to creative and innovative behaviour.

The literature on formal education constantly emphasises the importance of leadership in the school setting. Nominally this will come from the school principal. The principal is at the intersection between the teaching and the administrative systems, and to be really effective he or she must act as the mediator between the two. He, or she, has a major role to play in shaping the school's character, in cohering the staff as a team and in building bridges to the community, in encouraging and developing professional initiative and community involvement, in establishing organisational arrangements which support staff and have sufficient flexibility to accommodate changes in direction in the learning process, and in establishing patterns of resource usage which support staff initiatives. A good principal is a facilitator whose impact embraces the whole school. Whole-school support of innovative projects is very considerably bound up with the approach of the school principal and his or her capacity to involve people in planning and decision-making and the support accorded them.

The embodiment of these features in a school is no easy matter particularly in schools where the dominance of subjects isolates professional staff from each other and tends to focus attention on teaching rather than learning, and upon the teacher rather than the pupil. Moreover, in government schools where staff selection, including the principal, lies outside the school the instability of staffing and often the incompatibility of staff with each other pose major problems.

Innovative schemes not only depend upon leadership to establish a climate of support, they also depend upon the way the school's resources are managed. Support of an innovator can be more than psychological; a project can also be accepted within an organisation usually by the commitment of its resources and other support mechanisms. The provision of physical facilities, timetable arrangements, organisational cooperation of colleagues, and in-service training to meet the new circumstances are examples of support required for a whole-school approach to large and small-scale innovative initiatives in schools.

The individual innovator is placed in a most difficult situation if he or she is isolated with only personal enthusiasm to rely upon. The individual or the group is inevitably caught up in a matrix of forces including the school administration, colleagues, parents and community, the pupil group, the industrial teacher unions, the external administration of the education authority, and perhaps even political forces. The qualities required of the individual innovator, leaving aside initiative and creativity, would appear to include the commitment of much personal time, considerable quantities of endurance and energy, the capacity for advocacy or salesmanship, entrepreneurial qualities and ability to build coalitions of support. Abilities and capacities such as these when complemented by various institutional supports provide the best context for successful innovative activity.

More work needs to be done in this area of support particularly in relation to project directors (innovators) and their institutional environments. Projects and project directors remain too isolated. More attention might be given at three levels in seeking support. First, project directors can think more carefully about ways of ensuring that their projects are imbedded in the local environment. Second, more attention can be given to obtaining support from the various echelons of the state education authorities. Had the program continued it is possible that a more positive and forthcoming attitude might have emerged on the part of these authorities if they had felt that the program was to some extent supporting their system priorities and developments. Had the Schools Commission found it necessary to invoke a new and smaller array of priority areas to be considered when selecting projects for funding then consultation between it and the state education authorities might have resulted in the inclusion of a proportion of the priority areas of the latter. The program would have retained its responsive mode, Commission values and priorities would have remained, but the program would have also been seen to be meshing with and reinforcing states' concerns and considerations. If this had been done the program could have moved substantially towards enlisting the cooperation of these authorities in the task of modifying organisational structures so as to improve the climate for innovation and raise the practical levels of support for change. Third, it is suggested that the professional personnel of the Innovations Program, the counsellors, might have given much greater attention to 'environmental' factors in the appraisal of applications and in the selection of projects for financial support. Failure to more satisfactorily encourage beneficial relationships between innovators, projects and the relevant institutions may have been the greatest weakness in the program's approach.

Organisation, Administration and Personnel Development

Policy and Planning

Apart from the Commission and its secretariat, the main body with responsibility for planning and policy formulation was the National Innovations Committee. The importance and high profile of this latter body, coupled with the perception by people working at the state level that their main task was to interact with applicants for grants, meant that state and territory Innovations committees and counselling groups did not perceive themselves as planners and policy developers to the extent that they might have. This perception was reinforced by the initiatives of the National Innovations Committee and the Commission's secretariat which tended to place the local bodies in a responsive mode. This situation was being progressively changed between 1979 and 1981 as encouragement was given to people at the local level to examine closely the character of their local educational environments and to establish organisational frameworks and patterns of counsellor deployment which best interacted with these needs and characteristics. These tasks could have been much further developed by state committees and regional counsellor groups beyond 1981.

Organisational Diversity

The trend towards devolution of responsibility for decision-making and organising the program tested the capacity of its administrators to cope with divergent approaches to the common goal - to foster change and improvement. The practice and management of educational innovation, anywhere in the world, were insufficiently adequate for the Commission to be intolerant of experiments in new organisational modes within the program's framework. While overall objectives and strategies were under constant evaluation strong encouragement, within the limits of resources, was given to the program's personnel to develop and try out new organisational and administrative approaches. Inevitably this meant that different methods were tried out in different regions within a state and between states.(19) These innovations in program organisation did not seem to impair the program's overall aims and strategies and actually appeared to enhance and strengthen them.

Part-time or Full-time Counsellors

Almost certainly the most important resource of the program was the 'part-time' people who comprised the membership of the state and territory Innovations committees and the respective counselling groups.(20) From 1974 high priority was given to face to face contact between people associated with the program. Both the extent and the intensity of contact between counsellors, applicants and grantees were matters of fundamental importance.

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19. For example, frameworks of regional counsellor groups in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland and a mechanism for greater contact between the state Innovations committee in South Australia and the local Education Department.

20. For detailed explanation see p. 61 ff, Part III.

It was suggested on occasions that in these respects the program's impact would have been increased if counsellors had been appointed on a full-time basis. The idea had merit but would have meant a drastic reduction in the number of counsellors and therefore a reduction in the involvement of many committed and enthusiastic people, apart from the high cost involved. A state with a population and geographical size of New South Wales would have required some ten full-time counsellors with an all-up employment cost of around $200,000 per annum - over three times the cost of employing part-time counsellors on a national basis per annum. The idea of a small group of full-time counsellors would also have conflicted with the trend to devolution of responsibility in the program. The development of an organisational pattern involving small groups of part-time counsellors at regional levels was intended to localise and make more intimate and personal the operation of the program. Even though the idea concerning full-time counsellors was not pursued several state Innovations committees and the New South Wales Department of Education each appointed a person to act as a full-time coordinator of activities, or stimulator and facilitator of educational innovation.

Counsellor Development

The development of the program's personnel, notably its counsellors was of critical importance. While their development usually occurred on-the-job they required considerable briefing and education in respect of the program's strategies and its technical aspects. Each state and territory committee attempted at least once per year to hold an intensive course to brief counsellors and to improve the art of counselling in each group as a whole. In this respect the Schools Commission's Development Program which operated in each state and provided funds for the development of people associated with primary and secondary education was of considerable importance as a funding source for these activities. (In some states, however, the local committees administering Development Program funds either opposed the provision of funds to state Innovations committees or genuinely found other claims to be of a higher priority. In the case of the former view it was often stated that funds for counsellor development should be found from the program's own resources which it often was, as a last resort. Funding from the Development Program for Innovations Program 'in-service' work was therefore uneven between states and between years.)

Representation

In the latter part of the 1970's and early 1980's participation in educational decision-making and policy formulation was being fostered by most education authorities and was vigorously pursued by the educational interest groups such as parent bodies and the teachers' organisations. The question of representation on Innovations Program committees was frequently raised. Apart from the appointment of officers of Education Departments and Catholic Education Commissions as liaison officers to each Innovations committee at the state and territory level the Schools Commission did not formalise the representation of other organisations. Two concerns of the Commission were, however, emphasised. First, that in fostering change there was a need to involve all interested parties in the process and, second, that the prime consideration in the matter of involvement was the capacity, commitment and enthusiasm of those seeking involvement. In selecting committee and counsellor personnel the Commission therefore used as its main criterion the latter qualities. At the same time it endeavoured to ensure to the maximum extent possible that some of the people appointed had recognisable associations with the key education syndicates. These people were not to be seen as representatives of the organisations or watchdogs of their interests. Therefore, wherever possible, teachers' and parents' associations and the Associations of Independent Schools in each state and territory had people associated with them on either committees or counselling groups and usually on both. This arrangement did not meet with the approval of the Australian Teachers' Federation or the Australian Council of State School Organisations.

Balance

A further difficulty associated with full-scale representation on the program's committees was the need to achieve balance. Committees of eight to ten people had limited capacity to include all the interested parties at any one time. In considering the appointment of people to Innovations committees attention was given to balances between people from primary, secondary and tertiary education backgrounds and between male and female. Other considerations included the proportions of practising (classroom) teachers, parents, educational administrators and, in certain states, the appointment of people with ethnic and aboriginal backgrounds. When such balances were difficult to achieve on committees opportunity for redress existed in the counselling groups which were considerably bigger in size.

Restrictions and Dysfunctions

Earlier it was stated that the Commission's initial view of the program was that change should not be approached from within a bureaucratic framework but in a highly personalised way. Most education bureaucracies were assumed to be large and inflexible, leading to the imposition of rules and methods of operation from above. The operational rationale of the Innovations Program was planned to avoid bureaucratic restrictions and trappings. It was to be a responsive program relying heavily on human interaction in all its practices and processes.

To what extent was it possible to maintain such a non-bureaucratic mode of operation, bearing in mind that the program itself was created and administered within the context of the largest bureaucracy in the land, that of the central government? The success or failure of this endeavour was viewed differently depending upon one's position in the program. At different times applicants, counsellors, members of the state and national committees, and program administrators in the state and central offices of the Commission voiced opinions in various and sometimes ironic combinations.

Initially, even the amount of paperwork involved in preparing an application was kept to a minimum. A counsellor could be assigned to respond to an applicant who had only roughly sketched out what he or she intended to do. Project development could proceed from there involving the development of a statement about the project by the applicant and an appraisal report from the counsellor. At the formal appraisal and assessment stages these documents assisted in the review of the proposal which was conducted by a group including the responsible counsellor. From 1977 onwards increased efforts were also made to have counsellors personally advise applicants of the failure of their proposals in concert with the formal letter of rejection. In South Australia (from 1979 onwards) the letter of rejection invited unsuccessful applicants to contact the Commission's state office if they wished to talk over the failure of their applications with counsellors. This procedure reflected a compromise that was increasingly made in the program's operation, involving a lessening of the personalised approach along with the gradual reduction in resources available to provide the necessary services.

Another factor which tended to depersonalise and bureaucratise the program was time. The ideal approach as summarised above contributed to a lengthening of the time between receipt of an application and notification of a decision - between four and six months when the volume of applications was considered together with the actual steps in the process. Applicants naturally expressed concern about the speed of receipt of a decision even though they appeared to appreciate the counsellor contact. Pressure from the applicants, together with the strong desire of Commission staff to be seen to be acting competently and responsively, led to efforts to quicken the procedure without damaging unduly the personal approach. In this respect, many applicants were onside with the Commission staff and at variance with many counsellors and state Innovations committees who tended to voice disagreement with any move to 'bureaucratise' the program. From an administrator's viewpoint it appeared necessary not only to retain the essential rationale of the program, but also to ensure the efficient delivery of the essential service - the grant. On the other hand, those particularly concerned with the process and perhaps less concerned with the immediate product, the project, tended to oppose any sign of a weakening of the process, especially the personal interaction.

Two examples can be cited of this conflict. First, by 1976 the option of submitting a detailed initial application or not had given way to the former. This was vigorously opposed at the time by the full-time Commissioner specially involved in program management. The requirement prevailed because it had become evident that a large amount of time was being lost in obtaining necessary project detail and then clarification of it. By 1976 sufficient experience was available for the program administrators to know what sort of information was essential in applications. Not to elicit this information by spelling it out in a Guidelines for Applicants document and receiving it in the initial application was wasteful of time. Very soon this arrangement came to be appreciated and accepted. Although it did not necessarily increase the paper work, it did bring it forward in time somewhat, and as a result may have placed the program in a more formal and bureaucratic light as far as the applicant was concerned.

The second example was no less essential but much less defensible. It involved the refusal of the Commission (1979) to allow formal, paid counselling to be conducted in relation to Small Grant applications. The decision was vehemently opposed by most state committees and counselling groups and wherever possible the counselling process was continued by them on an informal basis. The Commission's decision not to approve counselling work in relation to the Small Grants Scheme stemmed, in part, from its inability to obtain the necessary funds from the Department of Finance. It also arose from the Commission's view that the scheme should be available to people on an ongoing basis with a quick turn around between receipt of an application and the announcement of the decision. The Commission believed that the small scale of the projects did not require an elaborate appraisal process. On the other hand, the state committees argued that they could not confidently recommend any project for support without the opportunity to go behind the written application to the actual context of the proposal. They argued that the program's rationale did not have a cut-off point in terms of size of project or grant. Their argument was well based.

The growth in rules and guidelines for the program was perhaps best illustrated in the production of the Handbooks for Counsellors and Grantees. These booklets were produced to provide answers and explanations to counsellors and grantees in terms of a range of matters that it was important for them to know about, or, that had been the subject of persistent enquiries. The document for grantees was essentially a facilitator of project implementation and administration. One of its main effects was to substantially reduce the amount of communication between grantees and Commission administrators in relation to technical/administrative matters thus releasing both sides for more productive work. Nevertheless, the existence of the handbooks could be cited as further evidence of the growth of rules and procedures within the program.

Perhaps the most contentious rule introduced into the program was that existing between 1976 and 1979 requiring that not more than one new grant per year could be awarded to a school. This matter is set out on p. 89, Part III. Again it was vigorously objected to by the state committees as an unnecessary bureaucratic regulation affecting the most appropriate application of the program's resources. There were, of course, strategic reasons for the rule and these were also set out earlier. Its existence, however, did represent a symbol of the degree to which the program had diverged from the earliest notion of unfettered interaction between applicants and program personnel and unrestricted opportunities for people with good ideas.

Viewing dysfunctions from the applicant's side, it is worth considering the extent to which some applicants may have been motivated primarily by personal advancement. This is the flipside of the effect of rejection on an applicant who may as a result have felt branded as unworthy or inadequate. No survey has been conducted into the motivations of applicants. The testimony of people working in the program at the state level indicates that the overwhelming proportion of applicants were altruistic in their intentions. It was noted, however, that as the program became known and established personal motivations did appear to take on a higher profile with some applicants. A number of people did benefit substantially in personal terms (as Canberran of the Year, from Churchill Fellowships and from greater prominence within their education authorities), but for most of these such rewards were incidental to their main objective. There is little doubt, however, that the receipt of an Innovations grant, particularly a large one for an ambitious project, did affect the standing of some project directors in their states and with it went opportunities for promotion. It is not possible to say how many applicants had an eye to personal advantage or the extent to which they benefited. The evidence which exists came from personal assessments of counsellors arising from their interactions with applicants. While the dominance of personal advantage as the main motivation for innovating could not be applauded, it must also be recognised that personal advantage is a realistic factor in encouraging people to take on what is often a demanding task.

The Involvement of Parents and Community in Educational Change

An end appears discernible to the fortress mentality of school teachers and administrators and the days when parent involvement in a school rested upon the management of tuck shops and decisions about which would be repaired first, the tape recorder or an item of sporting equipment. The development of the community as participants in the educational process is as much attitudinal as it is functional. Much work has yet to be done to convince large numbers of parents, teachers and administrators of the methods and benefits of cooperative participation. The task is now made easier because elements within each of these groups are taking the lead in advocating and exemplifying what should be done. This is a process of radical educational change. It is a process that was supported and given impetus by the Innovations Program, not necessarily through direct funding of 'parent participation' but through affirmative action and discrimination in the appraisal and selection of projects for funding. The building into project rationales and implementation strategies of cooperative participation by teachers and parents was aimed at not only benefiting the projects concerned but also, in perhaps microcosmic ways, pushing the overall process a little further along the path to wider acceptance.

The development of the confidence and willingness of parents to participate can be linked to functional and organisational questions including what they are to do and by what means. Significant, new innovative structures were established during the 1970's and early 1980's by government education authorities in the state of Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory which made provision through school councils for parent participation in school governance. Concurrently, another development involved the design of techniques through which schools and their communities could regularly reconsider their objectives and the means of achieving them. Devolution of this kind envisaged parents, teachers and students cooperatively evaluating their educational programs (with outside help where necessary) and planning further improvements. These large-scale innovations were supported and activated at the attitudinal and functional levels through smaller-scale projects such as those supported under the Innovations Program, projects which did in places help add living flesh to the structural bones.

Continuation of Projects (Funding)

Innovations Program funds were applied to enable a project to become established, usually from scratch. These funds which derived from the central government were essentially transfusions of money into a local environment which was perhaps unable to find the resources to support the initial implementation of the proposal. By its nature the program's funding was short-term, covering the first one to three years of the project's operation. Grants were normally restricted to an initial developmental period which it was hoped would allow projects to become firmly established, and to develop, if necessary, alternative long-term sources of funding. When the flow of funds from the initial grant terminated three options existed for the project. It could continue with locally derived funding; it might cease operation either because it had been implemented and had failed, or, succeeded and had run its course; or, it could receive further support from the program or from some other central government source.

Continuation funding from the Innovations Program involved the provision by the Schools Commission of additional short-term financial support for a project following completion of the original designated period of the Commission's involvement. Only in exceptional circumstances, however, were projects regarded as eligible for continuation funding from the program's resources. The program had limited resources with which to support new initiatives. To provide support to many projects on a long-term basis would have further restricted this capacity.

The Commission held the view that it was generally desirable for each project to demonstrate within the context of its own community (which may be a school, a broader area or even a system) its quality and eligibility for support. In principle, therefore, decisions about whether projects should continue or not should be made by the community concerned rather than by the Commission.

Where requests were made to the Commission for continuation funding the project concerned had to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- It is apparent that the period for which the project was initially funded was insufficient for its basic development;

- A further period of funding would enable new potentialities to be realised as the project unfolds;

- Because of its innovative nature, continuance of the project would appear to be of national significance.

These criteria were strictly applied and only some five per cent of projects received continuation funding, which was usually no more than for an additional year, where recurrent funds were involved. In making its decision to support such a request the Commission was supported by recommendations successively considered by a state Innovations committee and the National Innovations Committee, both of which could call for a counsellor's report on the project and additional evaluative information. Alternatively, the Commission could, where it felt this was justified, support the grantee in an application for continuation funding from some appropriate source, or participate in negotiations with such sources to obtain funds.

The problems inherent in external, central government funding of locally-based projects were recognised in both the United States(21) and Australia. While central government sponsored funding programs enabled and stimulated a wide array of interesting projects which might not have received the necessary initial financial support from tight, heavily committed state and local budgets, the short-term nature of these funds posed problems

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21. Rand Studies, Op.cit., Volume VII, Chapter 7.

for project directors and local authorities when external funds were terminated for projects with longer term prospects. For many projects the termination of external funding meant the termination of the project. On the other hand, in the case of large numbers of projects, this period of funding was sufficient for the intended trial or the actual conduct of the project. Under the rationale of the Innovations Program the continuation of a project and its incorporation or assimilation into the local setting was not necessarily the criterion of the success of a project although it might be very desirable. Furthermore, in those cases where the experience of implementing the project and the development of its sponsor were regarded as the most important and durable outcomes of it, termination of the project after a couple of years was of less concern.

Of more pressing concern was the requirement for the continuation of projects which had a service function, such as a non-sexist resource centre or a remediation clinic, and projects which clearly established their importance simply because they worked and had an accepted 'mainline' educational focus. In the case of these types of projects it seemed essential that at the outset negotiations should be carried on with the local authorities or potential local funding agencies concerning the longer-term prospects for their support. It became apparent that it was the stage prior to implementation that the local authority should be engaged in consideration of the implications of incorporating such projects into its operational budget at some future time. This was not to say, however, that these projects should not be funded from the external source if prior commitments to later support could not be given at the state or local level. In some cases it was wise for the external funding agency not to assist in the establishment of such projects if their prospects of continuation with local financial support were remote. This decision was made even though there was a chance that the projects might be able to generate support and reverse initial reservations through the success of their practical operation. In these cases it was a matter of judgement for the external funding agency to decide whether the risk of helping to launch such projects and build up the hopes and expectations of the sponsors was worth the anticipated end results.

In the final analysis the leverage which externally stimulated and funded projects can bring to bear to ensure their incorporation in local operational budgets is their demonstrated success in meeting needs in the school or local community. This can be helped by the degree of 'centrality' a project can demonstrate in relation to local goals and priorities. In this case a commitment to its adoption will be easier to negotiate. It will also be helped by the degree to which the project's sponsors can involve a wider group of people in its implementation and can develop in them a concern for its continuation. Such people might include the school principal, the regional director of education, the parents and the community. The final decision to redirect scarce resources into such a project rather than some other initiative, or to retain them for an existing budget item is political in nature and may be heavily dependent upon local people voicing their opinions as to the choice they would wish to see made.

Overall the provision of wide-ranging, small-scale seed money allows many ideas to be pursued into practice and their trial provides the opportunity for the best to be picked up and continued where local support indicates that they are relatively indispensable. Moreover, external support enables many projects which the local education authority would not be happy to commit itself to initially, to be implemented on a trial basis. Following such a trial the local authority may feel more secure about officially adopting the project and offering it support.

REFLECTIONS

The Characteristics of Innovators and the Impetus to Change

During the life of the Innovations Program greatest emphasis was placed upon responding to the initiatives of people at the school level. An assumption was made initially that many Australian teachers were keen to be more creative and that this interest and initiative only needed some stimulus to be realised. As the response to the program showed teachers, parents and community people did respond in very large numbers. Yet little is and was known about the forces acting upon teachers to give impetus to change initiatives and very little is known about the characteristics of the innovators and change-agents identified through the program. Furthermore, little is known about these people in the years following their work with Innovations grants. It appeared important to trace these project directors to see what influence they had subsequently in their educational environments and how they capitalised on their experiences. It was speculated that it might be more important to consider the later impact of this human resource - the pool of project directors sponsored by the program - rather than to place greater attention upon the continuation of many projects. In 1980, on the advice of the National Innovations Committee two researchers were engaged by the Schools Commission to conduct an investigation into the impact on grantees of the Innovations Program. At the time of writing their report was in draft.(22)

It was never clearly established one way or the other whether the program's principal aim was to produce projects or change agents. It would seem appropriate for it to have been both. These matters collectively intersect with the issue of incentives for innovation which is discussed below.

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(22) Schools Commission/J.M. Owen and C.K. Malcolm, Op.cit.

Personal Characteristics

Based upon random and untested information a number of factors may be speculated upon in regard to the characteristics of innovators.

It is known that many people awarded Innovations grants were in their late twenties to mid-thirties and had been promoted in the teaching service at least once.(23) This limited information suggests that some experience (perhaps up to ten years) and security as well as professional qualifications and entrepreneurial ability may be required before people feel confident, or receive the necessary support, to embark upon individual or group initiatives. If a particular element of teachers in the service is most inclined to initiate change, as this information suggests(24) then more attention could be devoted to it as a vanguard for the generation of change activity. It might be speculated(25) that apart from professional qualifications and experience certain personal factors may also be important such as the social consciousness(26), openness, and adaptability of people. As in many commercial enterprises the ambition and capacity for risk-taking of the potential innovator may be important. The latter may be very significant especially as in the education sector little extrinsic reward is available to those who innovate successfully. The intrinsic reward of satisfaction resulting from perceived benefits to pupils may be the most compelling factor.

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(23) J. Foyster, *Op.cit.*, Volume I (full report), p. 135.

(24) See also Rand Studies, *Op.cit.*, Volume VII, p. 189. This study suggests that the more experienced teachers are less flexible during project implementation and less susceptible to change. Teachers who had a sense of 'efficacy' - who felt they could 'get through to even the most difficult or unmotivated students' - were associated with more effectively implemented projects and with more project-related teacher change.

(25) See also A.M. Huberman, *Understanding Change in Education: An Introduction*. Unesco, Paris, 1973. pp. 31, 39, 51-55.

(26) This term might be related to Hoyle's notion of the 'extended professional' involving the extension of the teacher's professional skills beyond the classroom and involving a broader perspective that links classroom teaching with the goals of the school and the long-term needs of both pupils and society. Reported in OECD/CERI, *Creativity of the School*, *Op.cit.*, pp. 141-2.

Climate in the Community

Of the enabling factors operating outside the individual or group the most potentially powerful would appear to be the ethos and climate generated in the community and the institution with which these people are associated. A powerful factor seems to be whether innovative activity can find congruence with social need and cultural values. In most educational institutions the greatest amount of time and energy is devoted to maintaining routine functions or regularities and little is set aside for diagnosis, planning, or innovation. The educational market place is minimally competitive and the system largely obligatory, hence the external pressure to maintain service quality and product differentiation is very limited. Furthermore, there are few proofs in education as to what is best hence the pressure to try new approaches is also limited. If these interpretations are correct then external forces such as community pressures (for example, in relation to sex education) or crises (for example, youth unemployment) may be the greatest catalysts in the promotion and diagnosis of change in educational institutions. The receptivity of teachers to these pressures and the quality and pertinence of their responses will be significantly affected by the ethos or outlook towards change developed in the institution.

Institutional Setting

Emphasis has already been placed upon the importance of the institutional setting in encouraging and supporting innovation by school and community-based people. Systems and institutions which place considerable value upon change, adaptation and improvement and encourage it by appropriate leadership qualities emphasising openness to staff initiatives and giving support to these initiatives through integrated social settings may provide the best context for innovations to be thought out and applied.

Availability of Resources

The availability of, and power to control, resources appears to be another factor facilitating innovative effort. The lack of resources and facilities sometimes calls forth ingenuity to make up the deficits and may also stimulate new educational approaches to teaching and learning. On the other hand, it could be argued that an educational system or institution, should have a quantity of 'slack' resources which can be assigned to projects involving change and adaptation. At the macro, system level this was one basis upon which the Commission presented its case for the maintenance of the Innovations Program. For teachers and community people to innovate the availability of funds which could be flexibly converted to desired resources was seen to be of vital importance; so too was their capacity to exert sovereignty over these resources for the duration of the project.

Critical Mass

A critical mass factor may also operate to generate innovative activity in a school or educational system. This factor may be expressed as a 'settled policy' in favour of innovative experiments and be subscribed to by the leadership and staff of institutions or the system. It might also be expressed in terms of the accumulation of a sufficient number of innovative experiments throughout a school or system, sufficient in the sense that innovation becomes respectable or the 'done thing' because of the number of people who have become involved in such activity. The emphasis upon funding large numbers of projects and the achievement of the widespread allocation of grants in the Innovations Program was motivated in part by a belief in this notion of critical mass and its catalytic effect. It was hoped that sufficient numbers of people would be 'touched' by the program over a number of years to produce a mass of change-agents who would have a continuing impact on their education systems at the local level well into the future. This would have been a matter for later program evaluations to throw light upon.

Networks

The 'critical mass' factor can also be linked to the mechanism of network building promoting the free flow of ideas and experiences between people. To capitalise on the widespread funding of people, network building and dissemination of information were given considerable priority in the Innovations Program. They were promoted not only for the sharing of ideas which could result but also for the contribution they could make to the development of a milieu. The 'critical mass' factor and the idea of a milieu in relation to educational innovation can also be associated with the building of community concerns about the desirability of innovation and a national policy which identifies innovation as a necessary, ongoing spoke in the wheel of educational activity.

Incentives and Disincentives(27)

In the broadest terms the matter of incentives for creativity originates from a philosophical view of schooling - a view of the work and the role of the school. The capacity to adapt to everchanging circumstances will only be developed and internalised amongst school people if explicit recognition is given to the desirability of creativity and innovation in schools and an appropriate array of incentives reinforce this perception. An ethos which clearly spells out the desirability of innovation should emanate from national and local community levels and from systems and school administrations.

Incentives for the expression of creativity rest upon three bases: a community ethos, individual professionalism and institutional organisation. The first has been alluded to briefly. The expression of a community (national and local) ethos will be dependent upon the general level of social awareness of the community, its willingness to tackle problems with new solutions, and the degree to which the school and community have built-in forms of two-way communication. In such a situation the school can

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27. For a wide-ranging discussion on the school as a creative institution, the factors likely to enhance its creativity and the incentives and disincentives for creativity among school people see: OECD/CERI, Creativity of School, Op.cit.

obtain a powerful community imprimatur for its activities and in general terms be guided by the community's broad conception of social and educational priorities.

Individuals (school people) are likely to be most capable of creative action if the conditions are favourable. Like people in other walks of life the teacher's professionalism does not always surmount cold assessments as to the implications of diverging from traditional behaviour and of upsetting institutional regularities. There is an economy of school innovation involving constant assessments as to its profitability. It is often the community ethos and the array of incentives bestowed by the community for innovative behaviour, apart from any altruistic motivation, which determines attitudes to the profitability of contemplated innovative behaviour.

In most situations the greatest reward for the teacher, both psychologically and in terms of energy conservation, is to remain 'stable', dependable and conventional. There are few rewards for people who admit changes are needed. The personal cost of risk-taking may involve clashes with school administrators, community and peer-group depreciation (lack of recognition), emotional and physical strain, and likely failure if adequate resources cannot be acquired. These types of 'resistance' to innovative effort, or assumed 'barriers' on the part of teachers, are often highly rational responses to situations identified as requiring change but placed in the 'too hard basket'. The profit and loss account clearly shows red and the possibility of seeing substantial immediate returns is minimal.

The encouragement to become more creative, to diverge from traditional norms of behaviour, can be made powerful. Social needs (the disadvantage of many pupils, for example) the intrinsic satisfactions teachers say they obtain from helping and seeing children learn, and an array of external incentives or inducements ranging from differential financial rewards to better school organisation and management, are all powerful forces capable of motivating change-activity. Apart from building a framework of rewards for innovative, creative activity attention should also be given to reducing many of the personal costs outlined above. After all, most school-based innovations are heavily financed with the personal effort of individuals or groups of teachers. Reducing costs appears to be largely a response required of school and system managements and will be discussed below.

Where the desirability of innovation is institutionalised the possibility of developing an extrinsic pattern of rewards becomes more feasible. If educational authorities and teacher unions express a commitment to the desirability of innovation they can underwrite this by revamping promotional structures or career paths and establishing new salary structures which reward and hold the innovative teacher. It is perhaps because positive attitudes to innovative, creative professionalism have not been adequately cemented in Australia that the pressure to consider relevant new, differentiated salary structures and career paths has not built up.

The testimony(28) of many teachers supports the assertion that educational innovation has an invigorating effect on personal and professional growth. Apart from social and educational factors suggesting the need for innovation to be accorded a higher priority in school activity this type of behaviour may increasingly become the stone upon which enthusiasm and involvement is sharpened if alternative employment opportunities and promotional paths continue to be closed off.

Specific, extrinsic rewards for innovation are very limited. Funding and recognition from the Schools Commission's Innovations Program constituted one of the few across-the-board reward or support mechanisms for innovative behaviour. The potential for developing a framework of extrinsic rewards and incentives, however, seems to lie most appropriately within the organisations comprising educational authorities and schools.

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28. Conversations between the writer and many Innovations Program grantees.

It is here, in the immediate environment of teacher activity and pupil learning that much can be done to build the ethos, clear away impediments and provide rewards or establish mechanisms which overcome dissatisfactions.

The focus is therefore returned to the school as an organisation, the senior staff as managers facilitating improvements and changes, and the principal as a leader giving direction (where necessary) and support to competent, discriminating professionals. The provision of incentives for innovation within the school is clearly a function of management and leadership. These elements must take major responsibility for establishing positive attitudes to initiatives promoting change. They should also work to establish organisational structures which are flexible (not rigid time-tabling which immobilises initiative, or even the contemplation of it), provide resources so that they can be flexibly deployed free of proprietary hassles, provide in-service education facilities to help staff members adjust to new roles and practices, develop participative decision-making structures so that people feel part of the institution and its destiny, and grant autonomy and operating space of varying magnitudes depending upon the professional capacity, inclination, and task-orientation of the teacher. Whether this formulation of desirable organisational characteristics is upheld or not the point remains that in the management of schools resides a major responsibility for the provision of incentives to innovate.

CONCLUSIONS: THE DEVELOPING PERSPECTIVE

Growth Points and New Developments

Centrality of Effort

At times the Innovations Program was criticised for what appeared to be its emphasis upon fads and fashion and 'doing old things better'. Its critics asserted that it should make a greater impact; that it should be a 'cutting edge' within the education systems producing more demonstrable change through the introduction of projects which would redirect thinking and practice in specific areas.

These criticisms had force to the degree one accepted the program as a catalyst for the development of new projects. If on the other hand it is acknowledged that the widespread involvement of people in change and innovation requires the development of people's skills and that many people will be at very early stages in their capacity to analyse problems, design effective solutions and carry them forward to implementation, then the support of seemingly innocuous projects takes on a different meaning.

The Innovations Program had a dual role. Through the program the Schools Commission sought to encourage the development and implementation of projects which would have a significant impact upon a classroom, school, community or education system. It also sought to build a constituency of people interested in change at the school level and to help to develop their capacities to implement it. This meant accepting the existing stage of development of teachers, community people and school administrators and encouraging the growth of their interest and capacities through the agency of projects designed by themselves.

With almost eight years of developmental work behind the program and some 5000 projects implemented (including some rejected by the program because of lack of funds, but commenced with local help) the arguments of the critics calling for greater centrality of effort should be addressed.

Greater centrality of effort would have involved giving support to projects which produced significant reorientations in either curriculum, pedagogical practices, or organisation. At least it would have required major variations to school and classroom regularities. Overall it required attention to matters determined to be mainline or of priority concern in a school, community or education system. To shift the focus of effort within the program in this way would have required greater linkage or interplay between the perceptions of those at the local level and the more global concerns and priorities of the broader community. This would mean, for instance, greater attention being given to the educational experiences of students in the years immediately preceding their transition from school to work. This is not to say that many teacher-applicants, for example, did not show through their proposals to the program that this particular educational issue was of importance to them. It would mean under the proposition being argued here that the Commission would have required the program to concentrate the allocation of its resources on such an area rather than on projects presented by teachers and others which addressed what some considered to be more peripheral issues. After eight years of developmental work such a change in the program's approach would have been desirable.

Two points require explanation in relation to this proposal. First, establishing a small list of priority areas or areas of emphasis as funding guidelines would have required careful compilation in collaboration with various bodies. The Commission's own contribution would have stemmed from its assessment of the educational issues requiring attention and those being recognised by the Australian community. Education authorities would have been asked to consider contributing priorities based upon their closer identification with more localised communities and their own systemic goals. Innovations committees and counsellor groups would also have been asked for input as they represented a broad range of local people associated with education and schooling. The priorities thus established would have been reasonably small in number, perhaps ten, and might have been set within categories such as special populations, organisation of schooling, curriculum development, and processes such as school-community relationships.

Second, a form of the response approach which was a fundamental element in the program could have been retained to the extent that ideas and solutions to problems (projects) developed by people at the local level, within the framework of set priorities, would constitute the proposals which would be considered for the award of grants. To retain also the earlier program approach which left maximum initiative with people at the local level and assisted them in their initial development, it is suggested that a proportion of funds available to the program in a given year should have been retained for the award of small-scale grants (say, under $1,000) on the same basis which operated in the program in its later years. That is, the major proportion of funds would have been allocated for mainline or priority activities and the balance awarded as grants for projects which arose solely from local perceptions of priority.

The Project Environment

Concern for the project environment or the quality of institutional development in a school relates directly to the proposal that a proportion of Innovations grants might have been awarded to 'mainline' projects. It is assumed that attention to projects aimed at generating thrusts in key areas of education should also require considerable assessment of the quality of their environments. Therefore the receptivity of the school to a project (even though it will probably have been developed in the school) and the commitment given to its support are important considerations.

Assessments of school support also involves the capacity of the school to adjust its resource allocation and organisation to accommodate and sustain the project. Overall the management capacity in the school can be assessed in relation to the support or impediment it might offer the project director. In those times when the number of quality projects being supported by the program was much less than the number seeking support assessment of the school environment and its capacity to respond positively to the implementation of a project could have become a greater consideration in its selection for funding. Such consideration might have been taken a step further in some cases by examining the commitment and support of the education authority itself. Support at this level would perhaps have enhanced the chances of the project receiving program funds.

Organisation: Regionalisation

Various pressures led to a significant decentralisation of the program's organisation after 1978. It was essentially a program of support for local initiative and action. It placed emphasis upon social interaction as a mainspring of innovative effort. Its personnel were mainly people working at the local level. It operated as a program under the auspices of the Schools Commission which placed priority upon the decentralisation and devolution of decision-making in education. Decentralisation of the program by moving some of the locus of decision-making beyond the traditional level of responsibility, the state, to small regions and localities and peer elements in those regions, was regarded as a major organisational development.

The impetus for this development arose mainly from the initiatives of state Innovations committees who were keen to give expression to the points made immediately above. The process of decentralisation was pursued most vigorously in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. In the former states the process involved decentralisation in the activities of the state committees and the counselling groups but retained for the state committee the basic power of determining which projects would be recommended for grants. In Victoria attempts were made to actually devolve power along with a decentralised administrative framework. Here the notional funds for the Small Grants Scheme were allocated among the regionalised counsellor groups who had for practical purposes the final say in recommending the grants to the Schools Commission. This was perhaps the most radical organisational initiative taken within the program and although approved it did not receive the wholehearted endorsement of the National Innovations Committee. The reason for this was that the arrangement produced a clash between the respective advantages involved in the recognition of local perceptions and the broader, overall judgements about the program's impact which could be made at the state or national level.

What Has Been Achieved?

Visibility and Priority

Perhaps the most important contribution of the Innovations Program to Australian primary and secondary education was to give educational innovation greater visibility and to make it a matter of some priority. Whether innovations are sponsored by education authorities, individuals or groups, alone or in collaboration with a funding agency such as the Schools Commission, the importance of planned change in the development of education and schooling would appear to be more consciously accepted than a decade or so ago. Recognition of the need for planned change is growing and should continue to grow. It has been stressed in several places in this document that there is considerable unease within the Australian community about a host of aspects pertaining to Australian education. This unease resides amongst people of widely divergent views about the nature, organisation and presentation of education in this country. A common thread which gives unity to this unease is that for it to be dissipated change is required. Positive change and improvement will become evident if constructive debate is encouraged, if the contribution to the creation of change by all sectors of the education and school community is recognised, and if careful and due attention is given to learning more about the process of change itself.

Initiative at the School-Level

The Innovations Program not only gave greater visibility to educational innovation as a necessary feature of any educational system but it also underlined the importance of encouraging initiative in schools and local communities. Its principal target was the people at the local level, people who in the Australian tradition had tended to be the recipients of change rather than contributors to its creation and planning. In this context the program appeared to have made a useful contribution to the growing movement towards school-based decision-making.

A Focus on the Change-Process

The other major contribution of the program was to give attention to the process of change itself. Apart from attempts by innovative teachers in Victoria in the 1960's and early seventies little had been done in Australia to develop new, indigenous strategies for planned change and improvement at the school level. Forms of the research, development, diffusion model in concert with the top-down, power-coercive model had predominated in Australian education when planning change programs. What is needed now in the light of growing collaboration and power-sharing between education authorities and people in local education communities is close attention to the ways in which change and improvement can be most effectively initiated, planned and implemented. Developing more sophisticated and effective approaches to planned change relevant to the Australian environment is a matter of priority.

A Constituency of Innovators and Resource People

At the more immediate level of experience and practice the existence of the Innovations Program had the effect of developing a constituency of innovators and change-agents in the education community. A significant reservoir of experience and know-how would appear to reside within all those who were associated with projects. Not the least, the program's counsellors developed capacities as stimulators and entrepreneurs of change providing a new and useful resource. Alongside the development of people was the establishment of a large number of projects, especially those of a 'lighthouse' or service nature, which made significant contributions to the character and content of Australia's educational services and practices. Overall, it can be claimed that the program contributed to a new sense of confidence and assertiveness by people at the local level. Problems and issues are now more likely to be tackled by school communities than they were only a few years ago. Tackling issues now also involves creating solutions and attempting their implementation. The stimulus to convert issues into new ideas and ideas into an action project was helped by the existence of the Innovations Program and the small, marginal and additional resources it was able to put into the field to support this process.

Affirmations

Experience and close monitoring of the program in action leads to several affirmations relating to its approach. First, that there is great value for schooling in recognising the capacities of people at the local level, in encouraging their engagement in finding solutions to problems, and creating new approaches to educational practice. Second, that within certain limits, resources should be made available to people in a way which responds to their perceptions and assessments of local needs and does not impose solutions along with the resources. Third, that innovation and change, its stimulation, development, implementation and dissemination require the collaboration of people and rests a great deal upon the quality of the social interaction which can be generated in the process. This affirms the need for project directors to have maximum opportunity to interact with colleagues, the importance of counsellors as supportive, non-directive intermediaries in the process, and the need to develop further the interaction between project directors and the managers and administrators of schooling throughout the hierarchical levels. Fourth, it is affirmed that for ideas to be converted into practice additional resources are almost always necessary. Often these resources are unavailable through conventional channels in a school or community and that if local people are to be empowered to act then additional resources must often be available from some additional source which can effectively and sympathetically apply them. Last, it is affirmed that a program such as the Innovations Program will always have limited capacity to build a new approach to change in education. It must be seen as one of many formal and informal approaches to the development of awareness about the need for educational change and the means by which it will be expressed in practice.

APPENDIX

Innovations Program Statistics (1)

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1. More extensive statistics relating to the program can be obtained from, Schools Commission Evaluation Studies. Report of a National Evaluation of the Special Projects (Innovations) Program, Schools Commission, Canberra, 1979.

TABLE I

FUNDING OF THE SPECIAL PROJECTS PROGRAM, 1974-81 (1)

Act of the Commonwealth (central) Parliament	Year(s) Funds Initially Applied	Total Funds for the Program $	Innovations Program Component $	Other Special(1) Projects $
States Grants (Schools) Act 1973	1974-1975	7,200,000	5,615,500	1,584,500
States Grants (Schools) Act 1976	1976	4,138,500	3,306,410	832,090
States Grants (Schools Assistance) Act 1976	1977	4,576,000	3,728,924	847,076
States Grants (Schools Assistance) Act 1977	1978	3,970,500	3,219,500	751,000
States Grants (Schools Assistance) Act 1978	1979	4,073,500	3,108,500	965,000
States Grants (Schools Assistance) Act 1979	1980	3,314,000	2,337,000	977,000
States Grants (Schools Assistance) Act 1980	1981	3,675,500 (est)	2,579,000	1,096,500

1. The Special Projects Program had several components. The largest in money terms was the 'Innovations Program'. 'Other Special Projects' include: grants to education systems, funds for the national School-Level Evaluation project, and funds for the national Choice and Diversity Within Government Schools Project.

TABLE II

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

MONEY ALLOCATIONS FOR NEW PROJECTS BY STATE, EDUCATION SYSTEM OR OTHER, 1978 AND 1979.

State or Territory		Government Schools	Non-Government Non-Catholic Schools	Catholic Schools	Other Schools (Community/ Alternative)	Other	Inter-system Cooperation	Total
New South Wales	$	805,347	20,514	212,360	29,538	132,669	146,306	1,346,734
	%	59.8	1.5	15.8	2.2	9.8	10.9	100.0
Victoria	$	957,242	1,470	145,355	44,338	266,393	10,424	1,425,222
	%	67.2	0.1	10.2	3.1	18.7	0.7	100.0
Queensland	$	393,269	57,168	199,137	2,026	159,195	-	810,795
	%	48.5	7.1	24.5	0.3	19.6	-	100.0
South Australia	$	313,089	15,749	84,831	1,780	55,367	21,861	492,677
	%	63.6	3.2	17.2	0.4	11.2	4.4	100.0
Western Australia	$	475,553	16,730	246,648	9,273	13,490	-	761,694
	%	62.4	2.2	32.4	1.2	1.8	-	100.0
Tasmania	$	292,623	4,015	-	152,180	32,076	-	480,894
	%	60.9	0.8	-	31.6	6.7	-	100.0
Australian Capital Territory	$	45,208	-	18,161	-	58,623	68,776	190,768
	%	23.7	-	9.5	-	30.7	36.1	100.0
Northern Territory	$	60,908	-	21,201	-	300	-	82,409
	%	73.9	-	25.7	-	0.4	-	100.0
Total	$	3,343,239	115,646	927,693	239,135	718,113	247,367	5,591,193
	%	59.8	2.1	16.6	4.3	12.8	4.4	100.0

Program funds were also allocated to state and territory Innovations committees for sub-program activities such as dissemination of information, project evaluation and support of grantees. Funds were also applied to supplement grants for inflation etc., and, in very limited cases, to assist projects to be carried on beyond the initial period of Schools Commission support. Funds for these purposes are not included here.

TABLE III

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

MONEY ALLOCATIONS FOR NEW PROJECTS BY STATE, EDUCATION SYSTEM OR OTHER 1980 and 1981

State or Territory		Government Schools	Non-Government Non-Catholic Schools	Catholic Schools	Other Schools (Community/ Alternative)	Other	Inter-system Cooperation	Total
New South Wales	$	593,752	-	112,695	21,428	90,140	167,387	985,402
	%	60.30	-	11.40	2.16	9.14	17.0	100.0
Victoria	$	588,952	31,035	153,965	44,176	173,264	9,106	1,000,498
	%	58.86	3.10	15.38	4.41	17.31	0.91	99.97
Queensland	$	365,203	49,949	122,264	-	57,335	-	594,751
	%	61.4	8.40	20.56	-	9.64	-	100.0
South Australia	$	339,239	131,420	64,949	8,279	5,152	3,062	433,832
	%	78.20	3.03	14.97	1.90	1.18	0.70	99.98
Western Australia	$	122,540	14,784	57,337	-	60,961	28,316	283,938
	%	43.15	5.20	20.20	-	21.46	9.97	99.98
Tasmania	$	162,107	11,509	5,926	-	33,958	-	213,200
	%	76.0	5.40	2.78	-	15.82	-	100.0
Australian Capital Territory	$	67,807	-	7,911	780	35,436	1,123	113,057
	%	59.97	-	7.0	0.70	31.34	0.99	100.0
Northern Territory	$	64,113	-	4,217	-	-	-	68,330
	%	93.82	-	6.17	-	-	-	99.99
Total	$	2,298,474	121,831	579,091	74,663	456,246	208,994	3,697,299
	%	62.23	3.29	14.51	2.02	12.35	5.63	100.0

TABLE IV

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS BY ORIGIN OF APPLICATION, 1974-78

Origin		Number of Grants	Percentage of Total
Principal		743	30.3
School Bodies		78	3.2
Teachers		1,263	51.5
Community		367	15.0
	TOTAL	2,451	100.0

TABLE V

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS BY ORIGIN OF APPLICATION, 1979-81

Origin		Number of Grants	Percentage of Total
Principal/Administrator		138	15.4
School/Parent organisation		29	3.3
Teacher		588	65.8
Tertiary Sector		3	0.3
Community		125	14.0
Student		11	1.2
	TOTAL	894	100.0

TABLE VI

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS BY EDUCATION SYSTEM, 1974-78

System		Number of Grants	Percentage of Total
Government Schools		1,586	64.7
Non-Government Non-Catholic Schools		88	3.6
Catholic Schools		443	18.1
Tertiary Instutions		26	1.1
Other		308	12.5
	TOTAL	2,451	100.0

TABLE VII

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS BY EDUCATION SYSTEM, 1979-81

System	Number of Grants	Percentage of Total
Government Schools	575	64.3
Non-Government Non-Catholic Schools	36	4.0
Catholic Schools	146	16.3
Other Schools	17	1.9
Other	91	10.2
Inter-System Cooperation	29	3.3
TOTAL	894	100.0

TABLE VIII

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, 1974-78

Level	Number of Grants	Percentage of Total
Primary (Elementary)	974	39.7
Secondary	1,045	42.6
Primary-Secondary	298	12.2
Tertiary	11	0.5
Other	123	5.0
TOTAL	2,451	100.0

TABLE IX

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION, 1979-81

Level	Number of Grants	Percentage of Total
Primary (Elementary)	334	37.4
Secondary	367	41.0
Primary-Secondary	193	21.6
TOTAL	894	100.0

TABLE X

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS BY REGION OF AUSTRALIA, 1974-78

Region		Number of Grants	Percentage of Total
Metropolitan (capital cities)		1,421	58.0
Rural		649	26.5
Provincial towns		381	15.5
	TOTAL	2,451	100.0

TABLE XI

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS BY REGION OF AUSTRALIA, 1979-81

Region		Number of Grants	Percentage of Total
Metropolitan		456	51.0
Rural		278	31.1
Provincial		151	16.9
State-wide		9	1.0
	TOTAL	894	100.0

TABLE XII

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

SUCCESS RATE OF APPLICATIONS BY STATE/TERRITORY, 1974-1981

State or Territory		Series A-F	1974-76 Series G-L_2	Series M-P	1977 Series Q_1&Q_2	1978 Series R_1&R_2	1979 Series S	1980 Series T	1981 Series U
New South Wales	(a)	217	389	827	386	490	460	258	263
	(b)	124	143	113	131	121	47	58	29
	(c)	0.57	0.37	0.14	0.34	0.25	0.10	0.22	0.11
Victoria	(a)	243	452	1276	314	460	621	247	370
	(b)	147	148	151	105	114	75	76	89
	(c)	0.60	0.33	0.12	0.33	0.25	0.12	0.30	0.24
Queensland	(a)	145	267	419	315	200	298	216	188
	(b)	79	84	70	114	56	76	87	49
	(c)	0.54	0.32	0.17	0.36	0.28	0.26	0.40	0.26
South Australia	(a)	85	205	405	210	190	307	104	164
	(b)	53	69	49	75	48	41	30	56
	(c)	0.62	0.34	0.12	0.36	0.25	0.13	0.29	2.93
Western Australia	(a)	52	104	213	133	125	222	66	120
	(b)	28	38	77	51	57	44	23	28
	(c)	0.54	0.37	0.36	0.38	0.46	0.20	0.35	0.23
Tasmania	(a)	29	60	147	53	60	100	52	65
	(b)	18	24	23	18	19	17	12	11
	(c)	0.62	0.40	0.16	0.34	0.32	0.17	0.23	0.17
Australian Capital Territory	(a)	28	46	64	24	52	41	19	28
	(b)	20	15	13	10	14	5	10	7
	(c)	0.71	0.33	0.20	0.42	0.27	0.12	0.52	0.25
Northern Territory	(a)	14	10	22	10	11	40	12	40
	(b)	13	4	5	6	4	10	7	7
	(c)	0.93	0.40	0.23	0.60	0.36	0.25	0.58	0.18
Australia	(a)	813	1533	3373	1445	1584	2089	974	1238
	(b)	482	525	501	510	433	315	303	276
	(c)	0.59	0.34	0.15	0.35	0.27	0.15	0.31	0.22

(a) = Applications considered
(b) = Grants
(c) = Success Rate

TABLE XIII

INNOVATIONS PROGRAM

TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS BY TYPE, 1974-78

Type	Number of Projects	Percentage of Total
General Curriculum and Teaching Methods		
. Audio-visual	259	10.6
. Open plan/Open area/ Team teaching etc.	154	6.3
. Drama	73	3.0
. Miscellaneous	616	25.1
Learning Difficulties, Remedial/ Handicapped Children		
. Normal classroom	93	3.8
. Special classes and schools: Specialist Treatment, etc.	185	7.5
Extra-School Activities		
. Camps, Outdoor activities	244	10.0
. Students out in the community	108	4.4
. After school	60	2.4
Resource/Activity/Library Centres	192	7.8
"Disadvantaged' Groups		
. Migrants	88	3.6
. Other	75	3.1
Involvement of Parents and Citizens in the Schools	191	7.8
New Schools - Aspects of Curricula	7	0.3
'Research'	7	0.3
Teacher Education	17	0.7
Miscellaneous	82	3.3
TOTAL	2,451	100.0

TABLE XIV
INNOVATIONS PROGRAM
TOTAL NUMBER OF PROJECTS BY TYPE 1979-81

Type	Number of Projects	Percentage of Total
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT		
. Core subject areas	89	10.0
. Electives/options	59	6.6
. Materials development	21	2.3
. Computer education	40	4.5
. Miscellaneous	44	4.9
TEACHING METHODS AND CLASS/SCHOOL ORGANISATION		
. Open plan/Family grouping/Team teaching etc.	19	2.1
. School based decision-making/Organisation	11	1.2
REMEDIATION/HANDICAPPED CHILDREN		
. Normal classroom (literacy/numeracy)	50	6.0
. Special classes and schools (Handicapped)	86	9.6
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS		
. Students out in the community: School/Community Interaction	38	4.3
. Parents and community contributing to school programs	38	4.3
DISADVANTAGED GROUPS		
. Aboriginals; Isolated children	51	5.7
SEXISM: EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY	11	1.2
MIGRANTS/MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION	26	2.9
EDUCATION AND THE ARTS		
. Music	30	3.6
. Drama and Dance	27	3.0
. Other (craft/painting/literature/audio-visual)	52	5.8
SCHOOL AND WORK		
. Careers education/work experience	35	3.9
EXTRA SCHOOL ACTIVITIES		
. Camps, outdoor activities out of school; Field studies	32	3.6
. After School Programs	16	1.8
. Environmental education/field studies	50	6.0
. Playgrounds/Sport/Physical Education/Recreation	32	3.6
RESOURCE CENTRES/LIBRARY CENTRES/LEARNING NETWORKS	37	4.1
TOTAL	894	100.0

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